

A GUIDE FOR NEW AND ASPIRING COMMUNITY COLLEGE CHIEF
BUSINESS OFFICERS (NON-TECHNICAL ESSENTIALS FOR GETTING
ACCLIMATED TO THE ROLE)

by

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ABSTRACT

The role of the Chief Business Officer (CBO) at the community college is comprised of leadership for a disparate array of functional units and collaborative leadership at the institutional level. A recent national survey indicated a significant percentage of higher education CBOs will retire in the next four years. The focus of this dissertation was to identify the skills and knowledge for the development of effective CBO leaders and to develop guidance for incoming CBOs to aid in their effectiveness during the first year of their tenure in the position.

This study was informed by qualitative research in the form of surveys and interviews of experienced Illinois community college CBOs. The information from the interviews was aligned with available literature in the field regarding the evolving role of CBOs, which is now less focused on technical knowledge and increasingly is focused on broader leadership skills. Respondent CBOs provided their insights on the most important skills an aspiring or novice CBO needs to know and what development resources are available to best obtain those skills. The areas of focus in this study were leadership development, relationship building, current and future challenges and how to meet them, best practices, and lessons learned from the field.

The product developed as a result of the study is a primer for aspiring or novice CBOs. The primer will provide a ready resource for the significant number of CBOs entering the field in the next few years and beyond. Chief Financial Officers making the transition from business and industry to the field of community college administration will also find the guide helpful for acclimating to the world of higher education.

KEY WORDS: Community college; chief business officer; leadership development

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughters, Amber, Laura, and Melissa, whose unending love, patience, and encouragement sustained me throughout the doctoral program and through the dissertation journey.

To my dear mother and late father, thank you for your love and support; I know this journey seemed foreign to our world, but you understood I needed to pursue it and provided me encouragement every step of the way.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Historically, universities were governed by faculty in concert with student input and demands as related to curriculum. As universities grew and became more complex institutions, the concept of a centralized administration comprised of professional managers was adopted. Under this model, “the professors concentrated on their research, scholarship, and teaching, and professional managers controlled the affairs of administration, thus dividing the ranks between administrators and teachers (Cohen, Brawer, Kisker, 2014, p. 135). This model is widely reflected in America’s community colleges.

Current community college administrative structures vary widely, depending on many factors including whether the institution is a single independent district, a multiunit independent district, controlled by a state agency, or aligned with a university. The size in terms of student enrollment also is an important element in determining the number of administrators needed to lead the college.

Most typically, a community college is led by a president who is either appointed by a governmental body or elected by local district constituents. The president is the chief executive officer responsible for leadership of the entire institution. The president’s role includes considerable external relations responsibilities, such as representing the college in relationships with community leaders, various governmental agencies and organizations, elected officials, and donors. In difficult fiscal periods, as much of higher education across the nation is experiencing

at present, the president may spend an increasing amount of time on donor relations and advocacy with governmental officials in the quest to raise adequate funds not only for essential college operations, but also for developing futuristic programmatic initiatives. John Roueche (2015) discussed the leadership role of the president:

Leadership is the ability to influence the behavior of others, and the successful college requires just that. No president, dean, or department chair conducts the work of all or a part of the college alone. It is, rather, the shared work together toward institutional goals that signals successful leadership and makes the achievement of institutional excellence possible. (p. 20)

While the president is the designated leader of a college, it is critical that there is an effective supportive leadership group participating in the shared work of the college.

The president's role is supported by a team of divisional leaders and staff positions. A typical administrative structure would include divisional leaders for academic affairs, student affairs, and business affairs. Depending on the size and structure of the institution, there may be additional divisional leaders in various areas, including but not limited to research, planning, technology, advancement, or human resources. However, the core roles of academic, student, and business administrators span across all institutions and merit additional exploration.

The chief academic officer (CAO) of a college has responsibility for leading the overall academic sector of the enterprise. In the *Encyclopedia of Educational Leadership and Administration* (2006) the role is described in this way:

Most chief academic officer positions include responsibility for the development, management, and evaluation of all academic programs and courses; overseeing all matters concerning recruitment, selection, evaluation, compensation, promotion, tenure, termination, sabbatical leaves, and assignments; and research support of faculty members and other academic personnel. In addition, most positions include the development and implementation of programs to improve teaching, learning, and faculty service and

professional growth. The chief academic officer also has oversight for all areas of student life, including student organizations, housing, student well-being services, and other initiatives that relate to life outside the classroom. (p. 122)

The CAO also may be involved with external constituents, coordinating with common schools in programmatic and articulation efforts or with area employers to ensure evolving workforce needs are met. The CAO also may interact with peers and legislators in the realm of policy adoption. In difficult economic times, the CAO also may help with fundraising for academic programming.

The chief student services officer (CSSO), or senior student affairs officer (SSAO), role typically oversees the areas for student support and student development. Toward this end, departments in this division may include counseling, financial aid, student life, and advising. The responsibilities in this role can stretch far beyond the functional areas, as described by

Hernandez, J. and Hernandez, I. (2014):

In general, this executive position functions within the organizational structure and is responsible for meeting the multifaceted needs of students and the various student services offices and departments across the institution. Most SSAOs hold a position on the president's cabinet and are responsible for the overall assessment, planning, coordination, delivery, funding, and evaluation of all student services and programs. As integral members of the executive leadership team and stakeholders in the development of institutional policies, SSAOs are responsible for leading shared governance initiatives with various constituents. SSAOs work to enact the mission while striving to achieve the vision of the college. SSAOs must effectively manage fiscal and human resources while also taking a leadership role in advancement and fundraising efforts. (p. 34)

It should be noted that the reporting line for student services leadership varies among colleges. In some institutions, student services is a part of the academic affairs division, to enhance collaboration among the teams. At others, the student services functional leader reports directly

to the president. Ozaki and Hornak (2014) describe the relationship between student services and academic affairs for two-year colleges:

At two-year colleges, the goals and purposes of student affairs are intertwined with academic work, even more so than one might traditionally see on a four-year campus. Collaborations, cross-training, information sharing, and partnerships across student and academic affairs are endemic to the work of the institution. To this end, it is not uncommon for student affairs units to be organizationally housed under academic affairs reporting lines. (p. 81)

The third core role in the second tier administrative structure of community colleges is the Chief Business Officer (CBO). The titles for this position vary, and include the terms CBO, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), and Vice President for Finance and Administration (VPFA). There is little consistency in the terminology utilized for characterizing the position, although position requirements and responsibilities are nearly identical. In some states, the term VPFA is used most frequently, which communicates more clearly the breadth of responsibilities of the position. In this thesis, the term CBO will be utilized unless there is a different title in a direct quote, in the name of an organization, or when describing the role in business and industry where CFO is more common.

Traditionally and currently, the primary focus of the CBO is financial matters of the college. In a 1985 study, Calver and Vogler concluded “CBOs viewed their fiscal and financial duties as more important functions than their administrative or business functions” (p. 40). West (n. d.) stated that while “The specific tasks CFOs perform are as diverse as the institutions that employ them” (p. 6), “the CFO most critically performs the role of advisor in working with the president and the governing board. Here the CFO is relied on to advise on a wide range of financial issues” (p. 12). In the current environment of declining enrollments and state disinvestment in higher education, financial matters are still the primary focus of CBOs, as

presidents and governing boards rely on the CBO to develop financial strategies to navigate through these times. Beyond financial matters, CBOs have responsibility for various strategic and operational units; these are not uniform among institutions and are further explored here.

The 2016 National Profile of Higher Education Chief Business Officers (CBOs) survey completed by the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) states:

In addition to overseeing institutional financial operations, a majority of CBOs have responsibility for the physical plant, auxiliaries, human resources, endowment, internal audit, and public safety. They not only report to their president but also have at least an informal reporting relationship to their boards of trustees. (p. 5)

In addition to leading multiple functional areas, the current environment in higher education has added new dimensions to the role. Mass shootings, unheard of in the past, have led to a heightened focus on campus safety and security. Environmental sustainability concerns have changed the approach to capital projects and to managing the college physical environment. The great recession of 2008 resulted in decreased resources for colleges, requiring the CBO to develop additional strategies for revenue enhancement or cost reduction. Finally, additional legislation at the state and federal levels have influenced college operations. Ayers and Goldstein (2015) characterize the changing role of the CBO in this manner:

The role of the CBO has always been quite broad, often with responsibility for all aspects of finance, human resources, facilities, auxiliary services, information technology, campus police, and risk management. However, the new pressures facing colleges today have brought both new and expanded responsibilities, including helping to guide strategic planning and associated implementation, developing entrepreneurial partnerships to create new revenue streams, developing plans for emergency preparedness and Title IX compliance, working collaboratively with other campus leaders to build cross-functional teams to provide more effective services, integrating resource allocation efforts with

planning and outcome assessment, and serving as an educator and champion of transparency with all constituent groups regarding institutional financial health. (n. p.)

Perhaps the single most influential factor that has had the most impact on the CBO role in the past few years has been the disinvestment in higher education that has happened across the country.

Changing National Environment for Higher Education Financing

The great recession of 2008 resulted in an additional challenge for all of higher education as state funding appropriations were cut significantly almost universally across the nation.

According to Oliff, Palacios, Johnson, and Leachman (2013):

- States are spending \$2,353 or 28% less per student on higher education nationwide, in the current 2013 fiscal year than they did in 2008, when the recession hit.
- Every state except for North Dakota and Wyoming is spending less per student on higher education than they did prior to the recession.
- In many states the cuts over the last five years have been remarkably deep. Eleven states have cut funding by more than one-third per student, and two states — Arizona and New Hampshire — have cut their higher education spending per student in half (n. p.).

Many community colleges also have other sources of income, such as property taxes and tuition; the above statements apply only to the state appropriation stream of funding. Dustin Weeden, policy specialist with the National Conference of State Legislatures, was recently quoted by National Public Radio:

Since higher education often doesn't have a dedicated source of funding, colleges and universities frequently take a hit during bad budget years. Higher education is called the balance wheel of state budgets. It's a large discretionary area where states can reduce in bad times, but then in general they also tend to come back and increase higher ed budget categories when good times return. The challenge has been with the most recent recession

is that the recoveries have been slower and much more sluggish and taken longer to get the tax revenue back up to pre-recession levels (n. p.).

This general disinvestment in higher education by government has also contributed to a new level of challenges for the CBO, as one of the primary roles of the CBO is advising the president and board regarding financial strategies to ensure continuing operations of the college without impairing quality of programming.

Annually, *Inside Higher Ed* partners with Gallup to poll business officers across the nation regarding college and university finances. As noted in the 2017 survey report, the 2014-2017 surveys included a question regarding viability, given the disinvestment in higher education. Among public associate-degree granting institution respondents, only 43% indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that they had confidence their institution would be financially stable over the next decade, the lowest level of confidence since 2014 (n.p.).

Coupled with declining resources for colleges is the current trend toward performance-based funding, in which a portion or all of a college's funding is tied to specific outcome measures such as retention rates, course completions, transfer rates, completion of at-risk students, or degrees and certificates awarded. As of 2016, more than 30 states had embraced performance-based funding in varying degrees. If the percentage of funding that is based on performance is significant, CBOs must strategize how to maximize resources within the scope of institutional mission and mandates. Maximization of funding has also become a significant challenge in terms of balancing the cost of achieving required metrics with the additional funds generated as a result of doing so. The cost of developing metric tools must also be considered, as well as the labor costs in tracking the metrics. Also, chasing the metrics may divert resources away from innovative programming that would improve student outcomes, such as developing

guided pathways, which are a longer term and resource heavy approach to improvements in student completions.

The totality of all the factors addressed above that have affected the CBO role changes the skill set needed for the CBOs of the future.

Changing Needs and Expertise for CBOs

The educational requirement for the CBO often depends on the complexity of the institution. A scan of position openings for CBOs across the nation reveals that some small institutions require only a baccalaureate degree, while larger complex organizations may prefer a master's or doctoral degree in specified fields, most often finance or accounting. The educational requirement is a baseline, coupled with varying years of experience again depending on the complexity of the institution.

While the traditional degree and experience requirements have not changed, the additional skills desired by institutions have changed. It is no longer sufficient to be the finance expert; the CBO must be a collaborative leader who has a keen awareness of the broader landscape of higher education issues, and who embraces opportunities internal and external to the institution to develop programs and strategies to achieve successful outcomes for the students and institution. Ayers and Goldstein (2015) summarized skills required from a review of open positions:

- Be an important partner with the president, provost, vice president for research and vice president for student affairs as they collaboratively strive to support and expand academic programs and research operations, as well as develop new initiatives and high-impact extracurricular activities.
- Develop a variety of student success initiatives and activities especially well suited to the institution's student demographic and their life circumstances.
- Provide leadership and support the development of creative business solutions to the challenges facing public higher education.

- Play an important and participatory role in helping to identify new revenue streams... including developing public-private partnerships and other external business collaborations.
- Be an active and visible member of the local business community, willing to reach out to city and other community leaders and organizations to establish and nurture positive relationships and pursue mutually beneficial business and economic strategies (n. p.).

Partnering with other senior leaders requires that CBOs develop collaborative relationships with peers and spend time to understand fully the academic and student services programming of the institution. Listening to the challenges that other senior leaders are experiencing may lead to additional ideas on how to provide support for their initiatives. Expanding relationships to include faculty and students and having regular conversations with them to keep a pulse on their needs and perceptions will help to broaden the understanding of these constituents relative to issues across the institution, including operations, academics, and support services.

Developing student success initiatives and activities appropriate to student demographic and life circumstances requires an understanding of the characteristics of students at the CBO's institution. Student demographics vary widely among institutions, although there are some commonalities among community college students. Community college students have higher proportions of underprepared students, students of color, students from lower socioeconomic levels, and first-generation students. CBOs without a background in or understanding of the typical student would be well served by sharing additional experiences and time in student events, and in collaborating with staff from the student affairs area who regularly interact with students, to better understand the population they are trying to serve. The NACUBO 2016 National Profile of Higher Education CBOs indicates more than 87% are white, 87% are married, and 82% have advanced degrees, with an average age of 56. Truly understanding the needs of a young person of color who may be a single parent, economically challenged, and first-

generation may take considerable time and effort, but if this endeavor is not seriously undertaken, the development of supportive programming well aligned with students' needs will be challenging.

Creative business solutions and identifying new revenue streams expand upon the typical CBOs area of expertise, although the current economic environment requires an acceleration of these efforts. Shared services, rental of excess space available due to declining enrollments, cost or staff sharing arrangements for specific educational needs within industry sectors, are expansions of the typical creative financial strategies a CBO may have developed in the past. CBOs may be well served to participate in national associations to share ideas with counterparts in similar circumstances.

Finally, being an active external participant with other business leaders, community leaders, and perhaps governmental organizations may be less a focus than internal administrative and financial affairs for many CBOs. The internal responsibilities of a CBO require more than a typical full-time work schedule and adding more external time will require a fundamental change in the approach to the position. Development of the divisional team's leadership capabilities will be critical if the CBO is to be more external, as accountability, accreditation, governmental regulations, and legal issues are responsibilities that must be maintained as well.

Need for Development of New CBOs

While there has been considerable literature written about the current turnover of higher education presidents, literature addressing the impending shortage of second tier leaders is sparse. Bumphus and Neal (2008) have presented the broader issue:

It is no longer a secret that community college leadership is experiencing an unprecedented level of turnover. Baby boomers' mass exodus into retirement is paralleled only by the immense expansion of community college campuses created in the 1960s and

1970s. This millennium's first decade will see more than three-quarters of its two-year college presidents and senior administrators leave their posts to begin other stages of life. According to American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) research, each year sees fewer and fewer would-be employees entering the pipeline to fill leadership voids. (p. 30)

There is need to develop leaders for all senior posts in higher education, including CBOs. Toward that end, various leadership development programs have been launched in recent years. The national organization Community College Business Officers (CCBO) has developed a leadership academy specific to aspiring community college business officers, recognizing that development specific to that sector is needed to fill the future leadership void.

The previously cited NACUBO survey includes information regarding impending retirements specific to CBOs, stating "About 10% of the CBOs planning to retire would like to do so in less than one year...Another 34% expect to retire within the next three years. This suggests that 44% of the CBOs planning to retire as of the 2016 survey plan to do so less than four years from now" (p. 25). There is a national imperative to prepare future CBOs for the impending tide of retirements.

The Changing Role and Future of Illinois CBOs

There are unique problems in the state of Illinois that have affected higher education in general. Originally, community colleges in the state were conceived to be funded in equal thirds by state government, local government, and tuition. Illinois, like other states, began to disinvest in higher education during the great recession. The most difficult fiscal years, however, were in 2016 and 2017 when a deep political divide between the governor and legislative leadership led to the longest period in history for any state to fail to pass a budget. Community colleges along with many other state assisted organizations were left without a major funding source. At

Kankakee Community College, for example, a review of the fiscal year 2016 and 2017 audits reveals that 2015 state budget appropriations recorded in fiscal year 2016 were about \$7 million, while in 2016, less than \$1 million was provided by the state in a minimal stop-gap funding measure. Kankakee, like many community colleges in Illinois, eliminated academic programs, reduced staffing levels, curtailed athletics, and eliminated support services such as child care. Not only did the legislature not fund operating budgets, it also did not provide an appropriation for the state's scholarship program, which caused many prospective students to consider higher education in other states where funding was stable, and scholarships were available. According to an Illinois Student Assistance Commission research brief from December 2016, "The absence of a final state fiscal year 2017 (academic year 2016-2017) appropriation to fund the Monetary Award Program (MAP) has caused unprecedented uncertainty among affected students and institutions" (p. 1). Neighboring states capitalized on the budgetary problems in Illinois and began actively recruiting students their institutions.

The outmigration of students from Illinois to neighboring states has caused considerable concern for the future of Illinois, in terms of human capital losses and future tax revenues. Smith and Wall (2006) state:

The migration of college students is particularly relevant in Illinois, because the state exports many more high school graduates to colleges in other states than it imports. This migration pattern is important because college students who attend college in other states are far less likely to live and work in their home state after graduation. Thus, when Illinois loses a college student, its ability to build a competitive workforce (human capital) is diminished. (p. 1)

According Harwood (2017) at the Illinois Policy Institute, based on National Center for Educational Statistics data, "Illinois lost 195,000 millennial students from 2000 to 2014, and the trend is accelerating" (n. p.).

The long-term effects of the budget impasse coupled with the outmigration of students from Illinois add yet another layer of complexity to the CBO role. Given financial constraints and less students, CBOs must position their colleges for long-term viability. The future is uncertain and transformative change is quite likely; CBOs need to be ready to join with colleagues internally and externally to meet future challenges.

Statement of the Problem

A 2017 survey of Illinois CBOs conducted by the researcher indicated 35% plan to retire in less than five years, slightly less than the 44% nationally. With the significant number of impending retirements in Illinois and across the country, the issue of having ready successors is critical. As noted earlier, the typical incoming CBO has a finance or accounting background and has earned a master of business administration degree. While finance is a critical component of the position, because the CBO oversees a diverse set of functional units and is an institutional leader, it is important that she or he has a general understanding of the multiple facets of the position upon assuming the role. It is equally important that she or he can develop quickly the broad skill set needed in the current economic and regulatory environment to become effective leaders in a timely manner. The challenge is in how to define what key elements are most critical to convey to incoming CBOs.

Wallin (2017), in her discussion of the need to prepare future leaders for the community college sector asked the pertinent question:

Thus, there is a critical need for providing leadership preparation to midlevel administrators: those directors, deans, and vice-presidents who will go on to assume senior leadership roles in American community colleges in the next decade. Leadership development seminars, workshops, institutes, academies, and programs have proliferated in response to concerns about the leadership pipeline. But just what skills and knowledge

should be included from among all the myriad possibilities for effective leadership development? (p. 514)

Goals of this Study

The goal of this study is to identify the skills and knowledge for the development of effective CBO leaders and to develop guidance for incoming CBOs to aid in their effectiveness during the first year of their tenure in the position.

Research Questions

The research questions will provide the basis for informing and guiding the study to achieve the intended purpose.

1. What are the Leadership Skills that the future CBO will need to be successful?
 - How can an incoming CBO obtain the leadership skills needed for success?
 - What are the internal constituents with whom CBOs have interactions and what is important for the incoming CBO to know about these relationships?
 - What external relationships are key for the incoming CBO? What is the best way to develop these relationships?
2. What are the Challenges that the future CBO will likely face?
 - What are the most significant and essential topics about which incoming community college CBOs should be informed?
 - Given the current set of challenges facing community colleges today, how can new leaders in the area of finance and administration best be prepared?
3. What Best Practices from current CBOs are essential for a new CBO to incorporate into the institution's finance and business operations?
4. What Lessons Learned from current CBOs must new CBOs learn for Day One?
 - What best practices and lessons learned will help community college leaders in finance and administration be effective leaders in the early days of their tenure?

Conclusion

The CBO of a community college is not only a leader of a disparate array of functional units but is also a strategic leader and advisor to the president and governing board. In the current economic and regulatory environment of higher education, the CBO needs a broad perspective and skill set to effectively fulfill her role. A plethora of general leadership development programs have been created to help fill the impending shortage of leaders for community colleges. This study will add to the body of knowledge on leadership development by providing a targeted development tool for the role of the CBO in community colleges.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Identifying the essential skills and knowledge required of aspiring and novice CBOs can be informed by a review of the literature relative to the historical role of the community college CBO, current expectations and needed skills, and current and future challenges in the profession.

Within the scope of literature reviewed, there are striking similarities in the evolving role inside academe and in the business and industry segments, especially as relates to the expansion of skills needed to be successful in today's rapidly changing environment. Finance professionals who seek to become CBOs in the community college sector need to understand current and future challenges and the expectations of the future for this role, and for those in the private business sector, the broader scope of the role in higher education.

The Historical Role of the Community College CBO

The 1960s and early 1970s were years of rapid expansion for community colleges, with the number of community colleges growing from 678 in 1960-1961 to 1,141 by 1973 (Cohen, A., Brawer, F. & Kisker, C, 2014, p. 16). Early research regarding the CBO role in the new institutions was sparse. In Cullen's 1973 dissertation, as cited in Calver and Vogler (1985), he noted that "little descriptive information about the community college business manager existed regarding personal characteristics, office organization and duties" (p. 38); and "in broad terms, the responsibilities of the community college business managers were: accounting, budgeting, inventory control, operation and maintenance of physical plant, personnel, and purchasing" (p. 38).

Calver and Vogler (1985) conducted a study in 1984 regarding the CBO's responsibilities and their relative importance, finding that CBOs ranked fiscal and financial duties, specifically budgeting as the most important functions of their positions. A shared role in institutional planning was ranked highly as well, as the institutional budget is inextricably linked to the institutional plan. In their findings, they also noted that the role was evolving, as they stated:

The early organizational role functions of a CBO underwent a substantial metamorphosis from the keeping of simple financial records of educational transactions to an ex officio status of the institution's governing board. The role functions of a contemporary CBO require substantial skill and knowledge in providing the complex business support functions of a modern academic institution. (p. 37)

Lapovsky and McKeown-Moak (1999) served as editors for a more technical guide specific to the roles and responsibilities of the chief business officer. While this work is nearly 20 years old, the introduction is reflective of the challenges higher education faces today:

As the end of the twentieth century nears, higher education faces greater economic uncertainties than ever before. Demands for improved quality, increased competition for state and federal funds, the challenges of integrating technology into the curriculum, and changes in enrollment patterns have forced institutions of higher education to reexamine their missions. Colleges and universities have been challenged by some declines in resources and a reduction of public esteem. Financial well-being has never been assured for colleges and universities, and the future is not likely to be an exception. (p. 1)

Several authors contributed to the guide, which covers functional areas previously noted but also explores the broader CBO role, expanding into additional areas such as the relevance of enrollment management, investments, master planning, and governmental relations.

Hurley (1999) referenced the Napier and Sanaghan article "The Changing Nature of Leadership: Implications for Business Officers" (1999), in which "the authors note that

traditional CBO leadership development has focused on the value of concrete, linear, and task-driven thinking and action. The authors assert- and this study affirms – the need for contemporary CBOs to concentrate more on the social, inter-relational, and procedural dimensions of leadership” (n. p.). Hurley suggested that the evolution of the role required a fundamental shift in the way that CBOs approach their work, stating:

The hierarchical management structure often utilized by large colleges and universities, combined with the nature of the financial and accounting work typically performed by business officers, fuels a task-orientation approach. Task oversight remains an important skill and management responsibility of CBOs; however, today’s business officer must commit to adopting a job-oriented focus that is based less on technical expertise and work as a product and more on relationship building and work as a process. (n. p.)

The evolution of the role of the CBO is not unique to higher education, and since many community college CBOs come from outside the field, a brief look at the general evolution of the CBO in business and industry follows.

The Evolving Chief Financial Officer Role in Business and Industry

Within this section, the term Chief Financial Officer is used, because in business and industry that is a more standard term. A global survey of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and how they viewed the evolving role of CFOs was conducted by KPMG International, culminating in the report *The View from the Top* (2015). The study results called for a “Renaissance CFO” described as:

an individual who builds on the wisdom of the past, embraces the technology of the present and imagines the innovation of the future. Any senior finance executive must assume many roles — from comptroller to technology evangelist — but the Renaissance CFO is an individual who embraces and transcends all of these roles to be a leader within the organization and beyond the finance function. (p. 5)

The report called for CFOs to expand their skills in strategic thinking, broaden knowledge of the business, stay ahead of technology, drive innovation, and invest in their staff by promoting key skills and collaboration.

Going beyond the finance function was echoed in a report from the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, *CFOs and the C Suite – Leadership fit for the 21st Century (2015)*, which concluded “for CFOs to be successful in this new environment, effective partnering across the organization was critically important, and new leadership traits and qualities must be learned” (p. 35). Collaboration, leveraging enterprise data, and gaining a broader business perspective were key skill development areas noted in the report. Also noted was the need for a CFO to simplify complex issues and be able to clearly communicate relevant strategies.

The Canadian Financial Executives Research Foundation conducted a study including CFOs, CEOs, and Board directors regarding the evolving role of the CFO. Their report *Beyond the Numbers: The Evolving Leadership Role of the CFO (2011)* indicated that while CFOs oversee finance related operations, they also need strong leadership skills including:

- The ability to simplify and communicate complex issues for a cross section of audiences including, the board, the executive team and the investors,
- The need to demonstrate a high level of integrity in order to earn the trust of their peers, of the CEO and of the board,
- The ability to be strong relationship builders throughout the organization so they can effectively understand the operations of their companies and support strategy execution, and
- The need to invest in growing the capabilities of their finance teams (p. 5).

The International Federation of Accountants (2013) underscored similar leadership skills in their discussion paper *The Role and Expectations of a CFO: A Global Debate on Preparing*

Accountants for Finance Leadership, as they indicated in addition to the traditional financial skills, CFOs responsibilities typically include:

- sharing strategic leadership responsibilities with the CEO and other senior managers and ensuring the finance and accounting function supports the business at a strategic and operational level;
- driving and managing change and innovation within the organization; and
- engaging and communicating effectively with colleagues, investors, customers, suppliers, regulators, and other internal and external stakeholders (p. 8).

Ash Noah, a vice president at the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, as cited in Kosur (2015) shares his insights on what CFOs of the future will look like. CFOs must become

- analytics wizards; manage in increasing amount of risk;
- adapt to new technology;
- become better at managing people;
- guide decisions in a politically charged atmosphere;
- manage big data as a large part of business operations;
- make effective decisions with analytics from outside of the enterprise;
- understand business drivers and the underlying non-financial information that drives the financials of their company; and
- make hiring decisions as a major part of the job (pp. 1-9).

Among these sources, there are common themes for the evolving role of the CFO, including more emphasis on strategic and innovative thinking, people skills in terms of collaboration and staff development, keeping abreast of technology and leveraging data, and communication.

Overall, the CFO needs to broaden her or his perspective regarding the entire enterprise. DeWolf (2014) summed up the role in this way “A CFO is no longer a bean counter providing financial analysis and mitigating legal and financial risks. Today’s CFO is the CEO’s right hand executive, a strategic advisor and an operator” (n. p.).

The Evolving Role of the Chief Business Officer in Higher Education

The literature supports that similar changes are happening in the education field for CBOs. Hovey and Boser (2014) state that CBOs are moving from the traditional model to a new strategic model:

Traditionally, district and corporate leaders regarded chief financial officers, or CFOs, as chief accountants. They were the individuals tasked with ensuring financial compliance, settling the books, creating reports, and cutting costs. The CFO was inherently risk averse and internally focused; he or she was there to backstop the ambitious plans of others.

Strategic CFOs provide chief executive officers and their leadership teams with actionable data and make explicit the choices and tradeoffs required in tight budgetary times. They partner with other executives to look at a company's cost structure and investments across the board and help make sure that the budget reflects an organization's priorities. Strategic CFOs understand the "why" behind financial decisions, can effectively communicate that to the public, and focus on building sustainability. Put simply, today's CFOs look not just backward but forward as well. (p. 1)

Hannah (2013), noted that CBOs were typically not trained in leadership, but rather in narrow disciplines, and the challenge now is for them to adapt to a very different leadership style:

Business officers are frequently task-oriented individuals who rose through the ranks because of technical ability rather than leadership skill. Their success is based largely on the extent to which they follow procedures and lines of authority that require discipline and conformity in highly stratified institutional hierarchies. Leaders who have developed their skills in such narrowly defined command and control environments and in specific service-oriented roles may very well experience difficulty when greater demands are placed on their leadership. The adaptive challenge for business officers, then, is to transition from a traditional, narrow view of leadership that centers on efficiency, control, conformity, and stability to one that encompasses and embraces consideration and

collaboration, creativity and innovation, risk and calculation, and empowerment and inclusion. (p. 30)

Much of the literature surrounds the shift from technician to generalist, as CBOs assume broader leadership roles in their institutions. Sanaghan, Goldstein, and Jurow, 2001, assert that

The issues facing senior leadership in higher education will only increase in scope, intensity, and complexity. The CFO will be at the center of trustee relationships, stakeholder inclusion, policy making, administrative and faculty relationships, strategy, customer responsiveness, improving core processes . . . The list goes on and on. (p. 43)

They go on to suggest that the qualities of self-awareness, trustworthiness, and agility, and the skills of creativity, communication, and decision making will provide the basis for leaders to have the greatest impact at their institutions. They suggest further that CBOs will have three new roles as a senior leader:

- Capacity Builder - CFOs need to find and develop good people to build the capacity of their institutions.
- Cultural Traveler - CFOs who are travelers understand the culture of their institution at a deep level and enable collaboration to take place. They act as bridge builders and translators between different groups. They have tremendous credibility across department and divisions and are highly trusted by academics and administrators. In short, they connect with people.
- Horizon Thinker - The ability to think about the future and develop creative responses to what is on the horizon will help ensure the long-term viability and success of the institution (p. 44).

They conclude that:

CFOs who possess the attributes outlined in this article, and those who are working toward honing these qualities and skills will provide the type of leadership needed for the times. They will be well positioned to make a difference at their institutions over the next decade. (p. 49)

West (n. d.) characterized the CBO role as having three roles: advisor, manager, and change leader. In the advisor role, technical skills must be supplemented by the ability to build teams and enhance relationships: “The CFO must understand issues from multiple perspectives, must build relationships effectively, and must think synergistically to become a highly effective member of the institution’s leadership team” (p. 23). In the manager role, leadership and communication skills are needed to build and develop a diverse team of people. In the role of change leader, “the CFO must master a complex set of more abstract competencies: ability to think “out of the box,” anticipating opportunities, creating a shared vision, and embracing change” (p. 23).

Fliegler (2013) interviewed several higher education CBOs regarding their evolving roles in a recent article for *University Business*. They affirmed that the role is expanding toward strategic leadership. Glenn Carter, associate vice president for financial administration at Walla Walla University in Washington State, responded in this way: “I definitely see a shift in expectations for finance professionals. We were seen as technical experts and custodians of the records and resources and are now expected to proactively seek to identify and promote strategic initiatives which benefit the entire institution” (n. p.). Nim Chinniah, executive vice president for administration and chief financial officer at the University of Chicago, added: “while once the CFO was narrowly focused on finance-related activities, now the CFO has an integral role in the development of the priorities of the university” (n. p.).

The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) provides a wealth of resources for CBOs, new and experienced. NACUBO conducts a national triennial survey of CBOs that tracks various data including job duties. The report from the most recent study conducted in 2016 revealed that additional responsibilities beyond core functions

relative to finance and other functional areas supervised, included staffing board of trustees committees and involvement in governmental relations. Survey respondents also were asked about which aspect of their job outside of core functions they thought held most importance. The top response was strategic thinking and decision making, followed by leading change and fostering innovation.

Conclusion

The literature, both in academe and in business and industry point to the expansion of the role for the CBO, from the narrow lens of finance and functional department supervision to a broader leadership role that requires a much wider range of skills. Aspirational CBOs should consider this transformation in their preparation to assume the senior leadership role. The literature also helps inform the primer for CBOs, included later in this work.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD FOR CREATING THE ESSENTIALS GUIDE

Why a Community College CBO Primer is Needed

Resources available for general leadership development in higher education are plentiful, but specific guidance for incoming community college CBO development is limited at best. To fill this void in the field, the researcher has developed a primer on essentials for incoming CBOs at community colleges. A primer is generally defined as a book that covers the basic elements of a subject, and the primer in the following chapter is designed in alignment with this definition. It covers basic elements for both novice community college CBOs and for experienced finance professionals from other employment sectors. CBOs in other employment sectors typically are focused primarily or solely on the area of finance. The same is not true of CBOs at the typical independent community college, where the CBO not only supervises multiple functional units such as physical plant, human resources, auxiliary services, and institutional technology, but also serves as an advisor to the president and Board of Trustees and is increasingly involved in external affairs.

Professional development happens in many forms, including conferences, workshops, structured programs of study, mentorships, and professional reading to name a few. Many of these options will benefit the community college CBO on an ongoing basis. This primer is designed to be a sort of quick-start guide, and to be built upon later by additional layers of professional development. Given the ever-changing landscape of higher education and funding issues, the successful CBO will need to engage in ongoing professional development specific to the field, and to higher education in general.

How the Primer was Developed

The primer is based on information gathered from current CBOs at Illinois community colleges. The community college system in Illinois is comprised of 40 districts, 38 of which are single college districts, and two of which are comprised of multiple colleges within one district. Each of the 38 independent districts has a CBO position, and the two systems have a one CBO for the entire system. Information was obtained by utilizing multiple methods, beginning with a review of position descriptions to determine common areas of responsibility. In 2016, a state-wide survey of CBOs was conducted to determine the general demographics of the group, a DISC personality assessment to determine characteristics of CBOs, and an invitation to participate in an in-depth interview. In 2017, a series of twelve interviews was conducted based on a purposeful sample of those who identified as willing to participate in the interview phase, that provided maximum variation in terms of college demographics, especially focused on student enrollment size, location, and urban vs rural settings.

The interviews conducted in the study were semi-structured, relying on a series of specific questions asked of each interviewee followed by a series of open-ended topics about which CBOs were invited to share best practices and lessons learned. The semi-structured nature of the interviews was specifically chosen to allow maximum input from the interviewees, allowing them to share their experiences in areas not specifically suggested as topics for the interview. The benefit of this approach is that it expanded the information shared in the primer, particularly as relates to best practices and lessons learned.

The primer is also based on extensive experience of the researcher, who has more than 15 years of experience as a CBO and more than 35 years of experience in the Illinois community college system. The researcher also has leadership experience with the statewide group of CBOs for Illinois community colleges and represents the group at the state level. These combined

experiences, with the invaluable input of peers, have afforded the researcher a broad perspective from which to write a primer for incoming CBOs.

Key Elements of the Primer

The primer is designed to introduce the incoming community college CBO to the skills and knowledge needed to quickly become assimilated in the role. Specifically, the primer focuses on leadership skills needed in the current higher education environment, key relationships that must be developed and nurtured, current and future challenges unique to the field and how to prepare for them, and best practices and lessons learned as shared by experienced CBOs across the state.

The primer is not designed to be a technical manual on how to lead and manage functional units, although a section on resources available to aid in developing a range of technical skills is provided. There are a few technical guides on the market, as discussed in Chapter Two, and most incoming CBOs already have a significant level of experience in the key role of finance. Therefore, the information included on technical skills is limited.

Limitations of the Study

The foundational study was limited to Illinois CBOs, where most community colleges are in single independent districts, and so the primer may contain some differing information than a CBO in a multi-college system, one controlled directly by the state, or one aligned with a university system may need. Still, as the primer is written from the perspective of incoming community college CBO development rather than a technical perspective, most of the information should bridge the gap among differing types of institutions.

The non-probability, purposeful sample of experienced interviewees that participated in this study were based on the perception of the researcher that they are expert CBOs in Illinois.

Merriam (2009) opines that non-probabilistic sampling is the most appropriate sampling strategy in basic qualitative research (p. 77). Chein (1981, as cited in Merriam) supports purposeful sampling as well, as he explains,

The situation is analogous to one in which a number of expert consultants are called in on a different medical case. These consultants-also a purposeful sample- are not called in to get an average opinion that would correspond to the average opinion of the entire medical profession. They are called in precisely because of their special experience and competence. (p. 440)

Similarly, the CBOs who participated in the interviews were chosen because of their level of experience and competence as perceived by the researcher. The researcher has worked with many of the interviewees for an extended period of time, observing them progress through statewide leadership positions and benefitting from countless engaging conversations where mutual expertise was shared.

The researcher has held a CBO and vice-president position at an Illinois community college for over a decade. She has therefore developed not only a sound knowledge base, but a network of colleagues who can also help inform this body of work. Recognizing that the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research, the researcher will strive to achieve an appropriate balance between personal perceptions and experiences, and the objectivity needed for scholarly research. Through inductive analysis of survey and interview responses, the researcher will distill the critical essential elements of knowledge needed by incoming CBOs.

Chapter Summary

The primer contained herein has been informed by a convergence of literature and document reviews, surveys and interviews, and the researcher's extensive experience. The primer contains information regarding elements inductively determined to be most critical to

acclimating a new CBO to the role, and information on professional development programs for future development. Practical illustrations of lessons learned, and best practices are included for immediate applicability of the primer for the user.

CHAPTER 4: A PRIMER FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICERS

Introduction

Whether you are considering a role as a community college CBO, or have assumed such a role, and whether your experience is in community colleges, governmental units, or business and industry, this primer will provide additional insights and information about the role through the eyes of current CBOs. Surveys and interviews were conducted among Illinois CBOs, some with extensive experience, and some who have just begun the journey, and who collectively have more than a hundred years of experience. You will find throughout this document, in italic font, some of the experiences we have had along the way; they are shared to provide practical context to the role.

It is important to note that while the role varies depending on size and governance structure, in higher education the role of the chief financial officer is often more expansive than in business and industry, and typically includes operations, effectively combining the CBO role with that of the Chief Operations Officer (COO). A colleague who has recently made the move from a governmental CBO to a community college shared that the major difference was that in the former role, finance and strategic issues largely comprised the role, but that in the new community college role, human resources, institutional technology, and physical plant / construction issues add complexity and the need for additional professional development.

It is my hope that whatever your level of experience and preparation, in the education sector or external to it, you will find this a useful guide to help you become acquainted with your

new role. To provide some practical experiences from the field of experts, you will find peppered throughout this primer actual events and circumstances in italicized text. If you are an aspiring CBO, you need to understand the qualifications needed to achieve your goal, which is where we will begin this primer.

Qualifications for Becoming a Community College CBO

A review of position descriptions for Illinois CBOs revealed that most institutions require a master's degree in business administration or a related field. At some institutions, preference is for an earned doctorate, and some prefer a certified public accountant. The minimum years of experience ranges from 5-10, with preference for progressive experience in higher education. Skill requirements varied somewhat, but typically included excellent leadership, supervision, verbal and written communication, organizational, and interpersonal skills. A few position descriptions included a commitment to diversity and equity, and to core values such as integrity, respect, and collaboration.

A good exercise for aspiring CBOs is to review a few position descriptions from employment websites, see what is required at institutions in which you may be interested, and then do an honest assessment of how your skills match the requirements. Once you've done this gap analysis, develop a plan to obtain the skills you are lacking. Ideally, develop the plan in conjunction with your supervisor; she or he is likely very interested in your career trajectory and should be supportive of professional development to help you achieve your goals.

Once you've achieved your goal of becoming a CBO, there is a broad spectrum of information you will need to know. This will take some time and intentional development to achieve. The following sections will help acclimate you to the role.

Welcome to Your New Role!

It is day one, and you are getting settled in your new office. Your first few days will depend heavily on the onboarding process at your institution. In many colleges, there will be formal orientation days, assigned mentorships, introductions to the campus community, campus tours, and if you are new to the broader community, introductory meetings with community counterparts and leaders. Other colleges may be less formal, and you will need to accomplish some of these on your own, typically with the help of an administrative assistant. If having an assistant is new to you, understand that he or she is also a professional at this level, and will likely be invaluable to your introductory days, and always for that matter. Your relationship with your assistant is one of the most important ones that you will have, and it is important from day one to spend time listening to and understanding each other's approach to how your office will function. The CBO role is very broad, and the assistant role is essential to keeping work organized in such a fashion that maximum effectiveness is achieved. If you inherit an assistant and you realize in the first six months that the relationship is not developing in a way that will provide you the support needed, you need to take action. Meet with the human resources director to see what the possibilities are to rectify the situation. Be firm in this regard; your assistant is vital to ensuring successful execution of divisional responsibilities.

If you have never held a position in the "C" suite, perhaps the most significant difference between this and other positions you have held before is that you are now the ultimate expert for your division; there is no one above you in the organizational structure who will provide you direction on how to handle divisional operations. While there have been a small number of presidents who have a financial or operations background, this is atypical. Presidents usually have experience as academic or student services leaders and have limited exposure to finance and the operations division. As a side note, you can take this as positive or not. If you have

limited experience, this may be perceived as a drawback in that you are used to having someone to provide you direction if you are in a situation you do not know how to handle. However, on the positive side, you have entered a position where under your leadership you have the latitude to guide transformational change and improvement if needed in collaboration with your team, in accord with your vision.

If you are new to academe, you need to spend time understanding how the academic sector functions differently than other types of organizations. Some of the more significant adjustments you make may be associated with how long it takes to get things accomplished, the hierarchy for decision-making, and the need for collegiality and consensus building in matters that extend beyond your division. When you are new, as with any position you assume, it is best to spend a good deal of your early days listening and understanding how things function at the institution you have joined. Approaching everything with respect and an attitude that well-intentioned people implemented policies and procedures within the environment and the information available at the time will serve you well. Be careful not to immediately try to impose a culture from which you have come at your new institution. Having said that, in time you will have the opportunity and responsibility to build consensus for changes that improve the operation.

A Staff of Professionals

Beginning with your assistant, you will need to spend considerable time getting to know your immediate reports. At this level, you will have a core team of professionals who lead the functional units that you oversee. Depending on your background, which most typically is from the business, accounting, or finance professions, you will need to rely on your team to help you become acclimated to the departments with which you are less familiar. Your educational

background may have given you a foundation on which to build, but there is likely much to learn when you are overseeing multimillion-dollar construction projects or entertaining a decision on whether to spend millions of dollars to migrate to a new enterprise-wide software system. While you will never likely have the functional expertise of your team members, you need to become familiar enough to ask the right questions to help guide major decisions as you will be ultimately responsible for the outcome. Fortunately, there are a multitude of resources that will help you become more familiar with your functional units over time, but at the beginning you should recognize your limitations and learn from your team of professionals.

External Consultants

Your team of professionals may be complimented by an established team of external consultants, depending on your institution. Consultants are for areas where you need specific expertise from time to time, but that would not be cost-effective to have as a part of your normal ongoing employee costs. For example, on occasion you will need legal guidance, perhaps for collective bargaining matters or if your institution is brought into a lawsuit. Your institution may have attorneys on retainer, or it may have a relationship built with a firm that you engage when needed. Unless you are working for a large complex organization it is unlikely that you will have an attorney on staff. Architects, engineers, and financial advisors are other examples of consultants with whom it is likely your organization has an established relationship.

Sometimes expertise from consultants is embedded within currently existing relationships. An insurance carrier may have considerable expertise within their organization that you can access through your insurance relationship. It is important that you explore your current relationships to ensure that you are availing your institution to the services they provide. For example, one of your responsibilities will likely be reviewing contracts, not only to ensure the

relational and business terms are correct, but also through the lens of risk management. In addition to the typical legal review by college counsel, larger insurance carriers may have a risk management expert on staff whose job it is to help clients with contract review and to help rewrite language that is beneficial to the college as opposed to the other party to the contract. Insurance carriers might also have free training available for employees, as their interest is in mitigating risk to the extent possible, and a staff that is aware of risks and how to handle them benefits both your college and the insurance carrier with lower claims. Also, legal firms may offer free or low-cost professional development for their clientele in a number of areas, in particular those areas with which you may be less familiar such as human resource or construction contract issues. Exploring and taking advantage of services offered within existing contracts or relationships will provide you opportunity for expanding your expertise, and that of your staff, in a cost-effective manner.

Relationship Building

One of the supporting research processes for this primer was having CBOs take a DISC personality test, to generally ascertain likenesses in style as defined by this instrument. DISC provides scores for dominance, influence, steadiness, and compliance. Respondent CBOs scored highest in steadiness lowest in influence. According to the DISC website, people who are comparatively low in influence have the following traits:

- are usually socially passive
- quite frequently have an affinity for things, machinery and equipment
- are generally comfortable working alone
- frequently have a tendency to be analytical and once they have sorted the facts out they communicate them in a straightforward direct way; and
- tend to take little at face value.

- They may well have learned and developed good social skills, but they only bring these into play when logic dictates such tactics (n. p.).

In addition to generally being low on “influence,” 73% of respondent CBOs self-identified as introverts. Why is this important? Because relationship building is one of the most important initial and ongoing steps you can take in your new role, and this may not come as easily for some introverted CBOs who are used to working independently or among smaller teams.

Relationships — The President

CBOs were asked about what roles they interact with most often, not including direct reports. The first role they cited was the president; some cited almost daily interaction, with the most common response being weekly. When you first assume your role, it is critical that you take the time to learn about your president’s leadership and communication styles and adjust your style for working with her or him accordingly. If you are not provided direction from the president regarding communication, you need to ask. As your relationship develops, consider focusing on the following strategic areas.

Frequency of Communication with Your President

A periodic meeting schedule is common, and some presidents work best if all non-urgent communication is reserved for that time that he or she has set aside to be completely focused on your division. If this is the style of your president, respect it and only send intermittent communication when needed. Recognize that as busy as you are, the president has several direct reports at your level and significant external responsibilities to handle. Other presidents may prefer frequent communication and dealing with issues as they arise. If you are unsure, you need to ask so that you honor her or his preferences.

Mode of Communication with Your President

You need to determine whether your president prefers in-person, email, phone call, text, or some other form of communication. This may be generational but not necessarily, and it is also something you should learn and practice. Some presidents may be informal and welcome friendships and texts, but others observe the adage “it’s lonely at the top,” and maintain a more formal work relationship with direct reports.

Written Communication to Your President

Written communication is something about which you need to get very clear direction. If a president asks for a report, do they want a one-page executive summary, or are they interested in all of the background and detail about the topic? Even if they ask for all of the detail, make sure you also provide a one- or two-page executive summary. Sometimes when a president asks for a report, it is because a Board member or legislator has asked about a particular topic. An executive summary can be a ready reference of main talking points for your president.

The President’s Desired Level of Knowledge or Involvement in Divisional Affairs

It can take some time to determine to the right mix of information to share with your president. At the beginning of your CBO career, or when a new president arrives on the scene, there will likely be more sharing of information, but in time she or he will likely expect that you will be selective in what you share, and that you will handle your divisional affairs. Weekly meetings may typically include items such as financial updates, construction updates, and impact of pending legislation. Important things to always share with your president include legal situations, especially those that might get in the press, Board-level issues, visits with governmental officials, and major problems such as potential union strikes. No level of

supervisor likes to be surprised, and this is true of presidents as well. Again, the level of sharing will depend on your president, but remember to always bring proposed solutions to problems, and be selective with what you share.

A comment I once overheard from a president talking with a fellow divisional leader who had brought a problem without a proposed solution was “I can do that for you, but then I don’t need you.” I *think* he said it in jest, as he was smiling and as the colleague was around for a long time, but it was a powerful lesson learned, I’m sure.

Relationships — Colleagues

Additional positions with which you will interact are the others on the executive level, particularly the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and Chief Student Services Officer (CSSO). The division that you will lead will need to support the programmatic efforts of these divisions, so discussion may revolve around resource needs, space and facility issues, personnel, risk management, and accreditation. The relationship with the CAO has been singled out by the American Council on Education (ACE) and the National Organization of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) for additional consideration and study. A conference solely dedicated to developing this relationship is jointly presented each year by these organizations. The purpose of the conference, as state on NACUBO’s website follows:

At no time has the relationship between the chief academic officer (CAO) and the chief business officer (CBO) mattered more to the effective leadership of colleges and universities. Together, these individuals must develop a clear strategy and be effective at its execution, seek ways to align priorities and budgets, and innovate. Each requires the other to be effective and advance the institution they serve. To help better understand and support this important relationship, The American Council on Education and the National Association of College and University Business Officers bring together CAOs and CBOs for an annual two-day meeting to address how to build effective partnerships and to meet

current economic challenges. This action-based workshop focuses on the dynamics between CBOs and CAOs and between these institutional leaders and their president, helps them develop a shared action agenda, and find solutions to challenging problems they face individually and collectively (n. p.).

Perhaps one reason that this relationship is singled out as more important than the CSSO relationship is that in some organizational structures, the CSSO reports to the CAO, in the interest of better collaboration toward student success. Depending on the structure of the organization for which you work, you will need to spend time analyzing how these positions interact with yours, and where you need to focus your time with administrative interactions.

One respondent to the survey, when asked about topics discussed with these fellow executives stated, “just venting.” After some time in your new position, you will learn who you can trust to share thoughts and frustrations with and know that they will go no further. This is critical at the executive level, as your words if shared could have repercussions for you and the institution. As an aside, also be very careful with your words, no matter the setting. At this level, sharing your thoughts or having casual conversation can easily be interpreted by some staff as equivalent to a directive. Be careful to define the context of your comments when interacting with staff. The more elevated your position is within the organization, the more power your words have. Employees will pay close attention to what you say and if you do not define the context, they may make assumptions about your meaning that may be completely false, and that may surprise you at a later time.

Relationships — Students

When asked about student interaction, nearly every CBO indicated the opportunity for interaction is limited, and they wish they had more time with students. Most indicated it was only at times when tuition increases or policies that affect students were being considered that they

met with student leadership. Some indicated that at welcome back weeks the entire executive team participates in greeting students and helping them to their classes. Only one CBO indicated that his passion for students led him to a program where he mentors students. Since students are the heart of the organization, I suggest it would be beneficial to be intentional about volunteering for a program that allows for student interaction. Listening to student voices is a powerful way to understand their needs, and doing so allows you to help develop solutions to meet their needs.

A new dean at our campus decided to start a food pantry after she realized the food insecurity problem facing our students. When she called for volunteers, I decided to spend an hour a week at the food pantry to help with this initiative, and also to create a venue to personally interact with and listen to our students. During subsequent discussions with students, I learned about their transportation challenges, and that the bus route frequency did not meet their needs to manage their lives with their academic work, jobs, and dependents. I met with bus company executives to discuss the issue and after studying the ridership they were able to double the number of stops on our campus, reducing the wait time for our students.

Another way to interact with students is to teach a class, if your schedule allows. A caveat, however, is to first get some experience and judge the work demands before you commit. Classroom time is the most precious time we have with students, and teaching done well is very demanding. If you decide that this is a route you want to take, make sure you understand the institutional expectations, and also make sure you have done some intensive reading regarding teaching at the college level. I would personally recommend Ken Bain's book *What the Best College Teachers Do*, which he wrote after a fifteen-year study of about a hundred teachers. In some classrooms today, lectures, notes, and tests are the norm. Bain speaks to deep learning and how the best teachers facilitate it. In fact, it's worth the read whether you decide to teach or not.

We all have teaching and learning opportunities with our staff and families; you will get insights from this book on how those moments can be more meaningful.

Relationships — Faculty

Faculty are another group with which CBOs have limited interaction, most typically in committee work. A few CBOs reported monthly meetings with faculty leadership as relates to union matters, and many reported that faculty interactions outside of committees happens almost solely at the negotiating table.

When you work with faculty, be careful to understand the differences between faculty and administration, and target your communication accordingly. Cohen, Brawer, and Kisker (2014) describe the faculty role in this way: “As arbiters of the curriculum, the faculty transmit concepts and ideas, decide on course content and level, select textbooks, prepare and evaluate examinations, and generally structure learning conditions for the students” (p. 79). Understand their focus is very different than yours; their focus is on teaching and learning, while your work is largely directed by external laws, regulations, and bureaucracy. Terminology is important when you are working with faculty. Woodhouse (2015) quoted Levy, an associate secretary in the department of academic freedom, tenure and governance in the American Association of University Professors: “They definitely do speak a different language” than faculty members, Levy said of administrators. “It's not simply a different language, it's viewing the university as a corporate model with a corporate bottom line” (n.p.). Be wary of using business jargon, such as “return on investment” when considering a new program, or “customers” when referring to students. A CBO turned president shared that in his experience, an important trait is being a “translator of languages,” that is, use language that is familiar to your audience, and terms to which they can relate.

Relationships — Staff

In addition to your administrative assistant, there will be some number of supportive staff in your division, and external to it, with whom you need to build a rapport. Staff will appreciate a visible leader who leads with a positive spirit. Leaders' personalities vary considerably, and I have seen leaders who know details about staff members and can easily engage them in conversation as they ask about their career plans, or more personal topics such as children graduating from college. Other leaders are quite simply not able to relate as well.

My institution once had a president who would not engage with staff nor administrators, even to say hello when passing in the hall. I approached the president and suggested perhaps intentionally spending more time with staff would facilitate communication and build support among the staff. The president replied, "they will know it is fake – I don't relate to them." We did try it though, with departmental tours of "conversations with the president." In one meeting, a staff member was sharing some details about his role with the president who promptly informed him "I don't care what you do." We stopped the tours and I realized one of my new roles would be to provide a conduit for the president instead of trying the route of engagement with staff.

Staff play a very important role in any institution, and they deserve a voice and recognition. One of the committees we created at my institution is a "Communications Committee," to which all staff and non-Cabinet administrators elect representatives. Each month we meet, and department initiatives, ideas, and concerns are shared. The president attends when his schedule allows. The committee is seen as a powerful way to speak directly to senior administration. Various policies have their roots in this group. It is important to recognize that great ideas can come from any level of the institution, and perhaps particularly so from front-line staff who interact with students regularly in their work.

Relationships — Board of Trustees

When asked about interactions with the Board of Trustees, the typical response from the interviewees was that preparing items for Board consideration and presenting them at Board meetings was the primary venue for interaction, with college functions and social events secondary. Many also participated in or chaired Board committees, such as audit, finance, or facilities. Board committees can be a very powerful venue for educating a limited number of Board members on important topics or plans. If the committee members are supportive, they can advocate for the plan at the full Board meeting, facilitating the support and vote among the other Board members. What you want to remember in committees and in general Board meetings is to listen intently and adjust as necessary to help your president best meet Board members' needs.

We once had a new Board member who had been properly oriented, but who still had a multitude of questions when it came to approving purchases. She wanted to know who approved the purchase, what competitive pricing was considered, was this a good use of our resources, just to note a few. I observed her questions and asked the president if I could present at the next Board meeting a high-level review about resource allocation and purchasing policy and procedures. He agreed it might be helpful not only for the new Board member, but as a refresher for long-standing Board members. After a fifteen-minute presentation at the next meeting, all understood the processes better, and there were far fewer, and highly relevant questions after that meeting. Listening and meeting the need for expanded education on the topic was the solution to making this Board member more comfortable with voting on proposed actions.

In terms of direct Board communication, most respondents indicated that is funneled through the president's office. A few indicated that Board members call them directly, but they inform the president as to the conversation. Remember, the president is the sole employee of the Board, and she or he is responsible to the Board for all that happens at the College; hence it is

important to most presidents that any Board communication is shared with them, so they are fully informed.

Relationships — Legislators

Finally, interactions with legislators was even less frequent than with Board members. Typically, legislators will be invited to visit the campus to enhance their understanding of challenges, and to be appreciated for supportive sponsorships or votes on legislation favorable to community colleges. During these visits, the executive team may be invited to share information as the content experts on various matters; as fiscal matters have been at the forefront for many states, the CBO may share high-level financial information. At these meetings, keep comments concise and on point, and partner with your marketing department for memorable visuals. The old saying “a picture is worth a thousand words” applies here. They will remember impactful graphics, but perhaps not the excellent verbal comments you prepared. This also works better with your Board members; in Board committee work deep dives into materials are important, but for the general Board, concise charts and graphics are impactful.

Work-life Balance

Depending on your previous experience, the demands of this position may be a very serious consideration in your decision on whether to join the world of CBOs. The breadth of the position makes it very demanding, and the nature of the position, particularly in that it oversees physical plant and security, means that you are point when the blizzard, tornado, flood, electrical interruption, water main break, or fire happens. These disasters generally do not wait for the nine-to-five schedule, and collectively, CBOs have dealt with each of these over the years.

I recall the time that several tornados were in the area. It was evening and we had an evening administrator on site who was a former Catholic nun. When the warning siren activated, she gathered the entire campus community into shelter

areas and prayed. I don't know if that helped, but what I do know is that we lost a couple of roofs and had broken trees and debris all over campus, no power, but no injuries. I remember getting the call that night and heading out to campus, putting on neon vests with my team and helping clear roadways and walkways to get pedestrian and vehicular traffic moving. The team was there around the clock until we were normalized enough to resume classes.

There were more stories shared than it is feasible to include here, but they all had a common thread and that is your president counts on you to be in charge when disasters happen, regardless of time. Sometimes it is not disaster, but something positive that happens during off-hours.

I remember being at the farmer's market downtown one Saturday morning, and I ran into the president. He asked if I had checked my email that morning, to which I replied I hadn't yet. He stated that perhaps I would want to do so sooner rather than later. So, I finished my shopping and headed to my car to check the mail. It was message about expediting a multi-million-dollar grant and requesting that I immediately call an office in Springfield. Obviously, I took immediate action, made the call, and provided the needed information. On that Monday, despite the fact that the president and I were both scheduled for vacation days, we were both on campus to review and provide signatures on all of the associated documents.

Depending on the institution, there may also be a requirement, or strong encouragement, for you to participate in various community groups. The most often cited requirement was for the CBO to be involved with the economic development group in the community, followed by the Chamber of Commerce. It is common for various charities to request a representative for their Boards from community colleges, and colleagues have been assigned to various Boards including the United Way, Red Cross, and Salvation Army. When you join a charitable Board, it is typically either because of your expertise — they may be looking for a leader, strategist, or

treasurer — or because of the resources you can bring to the table. This is another place where if you are new, you need to get a clear direction from your president on what you are authorized to offer these groups. For example, is it acceptable for you to commit your marketing department to print the programs and posters for an upcoming event, or can you offer campus facilities for meetings or events? It is important for you to know your boundaries of authority before you are asked, so get this information up front from your president.

When asked about whether they had an acceptable work-life balance, most CBOs indicated that they were satisfied with their current arrangement. Generally, they reported working about 50-60 hours per week, with around the clock every day of the week availability. A couple of respondents included their approach to work-life balance issues by indicating they were strategic about when they worked, for example, leaving for work very early in the morning when the rest of the family is unaware, they are gone. This leaves more time in the evening for family dinners and events. Many indicated that they had left the corporate world for a better work-life balance. One CBO indicated the hours worked are too many to count, but his perspective was refreshing:

I work too many hours to count. Part of this is my personality; I enjoy my work. I am reminded of the saying “If you love your job, you never work a day in your life.” I am generally at work from 7:30 to 5:30, and I work an hour or two each evening and Saturday mornings. For me, that is an acceptable work-life balance because I truly enjoy what I do.

I suggest this is not the norm, but depending on the situation, it may be more common than you would expect. During negotiations, times of fiscal distress when a budget needs to be balanced, or when disasters hit, you will likely spend the time described by this CBO. My

objective is not to scare anyone away from the position, but to provide you a realistic idea of what is required.

Position Responsibilities

While position responsibilities vary across institutions, functional units of responsibility that are universal or nearly so include finance, accounting, purchasing, risk management, and auxiliary enterprises. Additionally, leadership for technology, facilities, human resources, collective bargaining, risk management, and campus safety are quite common. Beyond the functional units, there are additional general responsibilities which may include serving as a chief advisor to the president and governing board, representing the college in external groups, handling legal and contractual matters, developing policy, and serving as treasurer of the institution. A sample position description, which is a composite of several actual CBO position descriptions is included in Attachment A.

Functional Units

CBOs were asked to provide their best advice about the functional units they oversee. Some of their insights are shared to help the novice CBO navigate the breadth of the position.

Finance

Being transparent in all discussions and presentations is paramount. Reference external sources whenever possible to underscore the credibility of the information you are presenting. Always use audited data whenever possible to avoid any semblance of subjectivity in the data you are providing. Have projections in place, although a former CBO turned president is quoted as saying “the only thing you can say about them is that they will be wrong.” True, but it does require a great deal of focus on the next few years and provides a blueprint for the coming year. And, sometimes you do hit the mark; I remember when a finance committee Board member was

impressed by how close the projection was to actual audited data. A great deal of work accompanied by a fair measure of luck surrounded that result. Another important thing to remember is that bad news must be shared just as good news is; be completely open with the president and Board and the institution about the implications of negative news. Be objective in your comments; do not provide generalizations but be specific and neutral. Have a great controller on staff who can provide the detail information you need; as much as you might like to prepare financial information yourself because that is your background, you will not have enough time to do all of the detail work that is required for technical reports. Rely on your team to provide what you need. Having said that, make sure you are in detail review mode; you need the skill set to ask the right questions and make sure the results are reasonable. Finally, have a good grasp on the breadth of issues impacting the financial situation of the college, and of pending legislation that may have an effect. It is always better to include possibilities, even in a footnote if they are not quantifiable, rather than not be prepared for an eventuality.

Developing the Budget

A note about the budgeting process, as this is perhaps the most significant planning document you will author. While your technical staff will handle the detail work, it will be up to you to convene a team of leaders, educate them on the current status of finances, review the resource requirements needed for the strategic plan, and then to set the overall tone and direction on which budget managers will prepare their requests. Once the direction is set, a decentralized process that allows for maximum input and participation will serve the institution well. One caveat to be wary of is that in the current environment of disinvestment in higher education across the country, it may be tempting to make across the board budget cuts or to have a negative and conservative outlook when you provide direction. However, this limits initiative and ideas to

move forward, so be cautious with this type of approach. I offer a sample budget direction communique in Attachment B that provides direction without limiting ideas for initiatives.

If you are completely new to the community college budgeting process, a good document to read is “Best Practices in Community College Budgeting,” recently published by the Government Finance Officers’ Association, which will provide you a model for understanding the process and getting started on developing a model that works at your institution. Another resource written for the higher education sector as a whole, which may be more beneficial if your college is not a unit of government, is *Higher Education, Fiscal Administration, and Budgeting: An Applied Approach* by Serna and Weiler (2016). This book provides guidance not only on budget development, but additional information on oversight and variance analysis.

Investments

As the CBO, particularly if you also serve as treasurer to the Board of Trustees, you may also have investment responsibilities. If you work for a public community college, there may be specific guidance for allowable investment vehicles for public funds in the laws for your state; familiarize yourself with the law and ensure your investment policy conforms. Here you need to note that your Board can always adopt policies that are more restrictive than the law, as reportedly is the case in investment policies at some Illinois community colleges. Many community colleges in Illinois engage financial advisors to assist with the investment of funds; much depends on the size of portfolio you are managing and the policies of your Board. If your institution has an associated foundation, the investment rules may be very different for those funds, as they are not considered public funds and more risk may be allowed. As a new CBO, study the policies and see how the investments are being handled when you arrive, and take like

action or adjust accordingly based on your understanding of the policies and discussion with investment committee members.

Leading through a Financial Crisis

A final topic for finances is pertinent to the current environment in Illinois and elsewhere around the country as the disinvestment in higher education continues to be a challenge for all sectors including community colleges. CBOs are instrumental in developing plans for responding to reductions in available resources. A simple concept is to increase revenues and/or decrease expenses when allocations decline. However, depending on the severity of the situation, it may be much more complex. The entire executive team, at minimum, must have a clear understanding of the financial situation of the institution during these times. Collaboration of the team will be instrumental in executing plans. Labor is the largest expense at any community college, often exceeding 60 to 70% of the budget. Implementing a reduction in labor comes with a heavy toll as layoffs and furloughs affect peoples' lives. Also, tenure laws and union contracts may prevent swift action; reductions in force for full-time faculty in Illinois require bargaining sessions. If an institution has healthy reserves it is worth thinking about reducing labor through attrition; i.e., not filling open positions and implementing a hiring freeze to the extent feasible. Again, you need collaboration from your colleagues to make this happen.

Consider other options — do you have any programs that are not mission-centric that you can eliminate without impairing instruction or student services? Do you have facilities that are underutilized that can rent for a period of time to augment revenues? Are there any services or staff that you can share with a neighboring college or other entity in your district? Consider the age of your workforce; is there an early retirement or voluntary separation agreement program

that you should consider? Creativity is not something CBOs typically exercise, but in this situation, be creative.

At my institution, we ran a public radio station. It was expensive and lost money each year. When the budget crisis hit, we looked for a creative solution as the radio station was the only coverage in our area for public radio. Our solution was to sell the radio station license with the contingency that the buyer would provide public radio in our area for the next several years. We did lose staff members who were associated with the radio station but did not lose the public radio coverage that was important to our constituents, and the money we received for the license was used for other priorities during the period of fiscal difficulty.

Depending on the severity of the situation, discussions regarding consolidation with another institution may be an option that needs to be considered. This is happening more often in the current environment. Findings from the *2017 Inside Higher Ed Survey of College and University Business Officers*:

One in eight CBOs say senior leaders at their college have held discussions about merging with another college. One in four say high-level discussions about consolidating services with other campuses have taken place. Business officers do not believe mergers or consolidations involving their college are very likely to occur. They most often rank faculty opposition, geography and desire to maintain the status quo as significant impediment. (p. 6)

I suggest there may be a bit of wishful thinking woven into the disbelief that consolidations will not occur. History will eventually reveal how many of the consolidations under consideration actually materialize.

Donations and partnerships are also worthy of consideration, as business and industry or private donors may be able to help with emerging needs for programs or capital equipment in addition to the traditional scholarship donations. Collaboration between the faculty who are most

aware of needs, and the development officer and president, who are most aware of likely donors, should be ongoing but may yield additional support during difficult financial periods, as efforts are increased to meet needs without utilizing normal operating revenues.

Sometimes a financial crisis will provide the impetus for reinvention that can have positive outcomes. Find ways to rally around the situation, and invite creative ideas from all areas of the college. This is a time to stay positive, even if the situation seems dire.

Facilities

One of the more important reasons that potential students choose a college is the physical environment, which contributes to the tone and mood of a campus. Think about the first impression a student has when they approach your front door and if needed, make improvements there for a positive first impression. Another habit you want to get into is parking in different lots and approaching your facilities from different perspectives from time to time to ensure that all facilities are making the desired impression.

Facilities Master Plan

A facilities master plan is a must; first, because in some states it is a requirement, but also because it provides a sequenced blueprint for upcoming facilities projects. A master plan typically covers site, potential new facilities, and major projects within existing facilities. One advantage to a master plan is that one or more Board members is typically involved in the development of the plan — if you have a facilities committee of the Board, this is a great way to get them more involved — and then the Board representatives can provide support for projects as they evolve. If your president is amenable, visit the master plan on an annual basis with the Board, perhaps at a retreat, and there you can gauge support for the next phase of the plan. Once you assess that with your president, you can lay out an annual plan for the coming year, rather

than approach the Board multiple times during a year with individual projects. One approach taken by multiple institutions relative to financing the master plan is to inform the community about the components of it and the benefits to be realized by the community, then put forth a referendum for a bond issue that will cover multiple years of the plan. In Illinois, such bond issues are paid back through a tax levy; it is important to translate the master plan into how it benefits the constituents of the district so that they are more inclined to vote for the referendum.

In some states, higher education is in a position of excess capacity. As more competitors enter the market, this situation may be exacerbated. Consider then that many campuses are fully built out — they do not need additional facilities. However, many campuses are getting to an age where major renovations are necessary to ensure that facilities remain attractive to current and potential students. Renovations are usually much less expensive than new construction, so if you have the opportunity to repurpose facility space rather than build new, take serious consideration of this and while new construction might be an attractive option, put forth a renovation option if it makes sense. It is also worth considering a master plan based on the need for renovations. Such a document, once accepted by the Board, provides a systematic way to move through the process of campus renovations without the need for approval for each individual project.

Leading Construction Projects

Leading construction projects can be a bit daunting for a new CBO, as generally this is an area in which we may be least prepared. There is a stark difference in sitting with your finance team and strategizing the year ahead, and in entering a room filled with engineers, architects, and contractors where you will lead the meeting. As with any project, the best thing you can do is be prepared. If you are taking over mid-stream of a construction project, make sure you have done your homework in reviewing the blueprints with your facilities manager, knowing the status of

the project components, and any current problems or issues that need attention. While it is not necessary for you to understand such detail as sheep's tongue drains (although this was a lesson for me once), you should have a good understanding of the project in general and what may be coming up in the next meeting.

If you are in the planning phase of a new project, there are some insights that you may find helpful. First, involve the stakeholders; I call them "building user groups," and let those who will occupy the building help design it for functionality.

The first building in which I had a hand in construction was fully designed before I assumed the CBO role. The building included an expansion of student services in which testing was located. The testing director, after moving into the building, came to me and indicated the space would not work for testing purposes; you see, she had not had any input into the design and the space was not functional for what she needed. Fortunately, we were able to make some low-cost changes with furniture and layout to meet her needs, but this was a good lesson learned; occupants must have input into design.

A good architect will request user input in the beginning phases of planning, so there are no surprises later in the process. However, as the project progresses and space decisions need to be made, the architect will rely on you for decisions so make sure you have spent enough time with the users to understand their needs.

It is equally important that, once the constituents have input and the design phase is done, limit any further changes once the plans are complete. Change orders are expensive, so involve those whose input you need to at the beginning, thank them for their participation, and then keep them informed about the progress of the project. Another piece of advice is to limit the number of people involved when it comes to finishes, such as colors and patterns. In this phase of the planning, an interior designer should bring you a limited number of choices based on current best

practices. Bring your best three or four advisors into the room and choose from the palettes presented, but understand that if you bring ten or twelve constituents into the room, there will likely be a divergence of opinions that will leave some feeling positive and some negative about the choices. Therefore, in this phase simply rely on the expert and a few trusted opinions, make a decision and go with it. With interior design, you will always have some number of people who approve and some who will not; accept this and move on — you will never please everyone because we all have different tastes.

I once had a Board chair tour a new facility and remark that one of the fabrics chosen looked like archery targets. After some reflection, it actually does, but given I was an accountant and I relied on an interior designer, I suspect there was some fabulous reason why I had little archery targets here and there in the facility.

Given that most novice CBOs have limited experience with construction, there can be a steep learning curve with this aspect of the job. Once CBO advised in this way:

When I assumed the CBO role at my college, my president congratulated me and was discussing the duties including being in charge of a major construction project that was underway. I joked that I wasn't even allowed to hang a picture in my house, but then started thinking about how to approach the next construction meeting. The lesson learned is that you need to be humble in admitting your lack of experience and surround yourself with people you trust for their related expertise.

Human Resources

The Human Resources (HR) Office is supervised by about half of the respondents to the survey. This is an area where it is likely that there has been educational exposure and some level of experience by an incoming CBO. Having said that, managing a limited number of staff is very

different than being charged with overseeing the entire human resources operation of the institution. Human resource management is a complex combination of legal and people skills, and if you are fortunate you will inherit a human resources leader who has optimal skills with both. Still, if you have oversight for this area, you must have at least rudimentary knowledge of certain aspects of human resource management, first because policies from this area affect peoples' lives and must be handled with a very high level of thoughtful consideration, and second because the ramifications of mistakes in this area can be costly both in terms of money and for the image of the institution. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is an excellent resource for navigating this complex field, and the reasonable cost of becoming a member makes it worthy of consideration. According to the SHRM website:

Our vision is to be a preeminent and globally recognized authority whose leadership, perspective, resources and expertise are sought and utilized to address the most pressing, current and emerging human resource management issues.

Our mission is to be a globally recognized HR professional society that exists to develop and serve the HR professional, and advance and lead the HR profession. SHRM provides education, thought leadership, certification, community and advocacy to enhance the practice of human resource management and the effectiveness of HR professionals in the organizations and communities they serve.

Originally founded as the American Society for Personnel Administration (ASPA) by a small but visionary group of personnel administrators, SHRM has grown into the world's largest HR membership organization. SHRM has a dedicated staff of over 350 and is headquartered in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. (n. p.)

There are local chapters of the organization that provide presentations on topics of current interest and that provide for networking opportunities. The SHRM website provides information on a plethora of helpful topics, including legal issues. There are decades of legislation regarding

issues relative to human resource management, and while you need not know all of the details of each law, you should have cursory knowledge and will likely want to retain legal counsel with expertise in this field to assist with difficult situations.

Human Resource Legislation

Among the most complex areas of human resource management are the legal requirements mandated by state and/or federal legislation. To give you a sense of the breadth of legislation in this area, included below is a page from the SHRM website, on which they provide links to information about each law. This is a very valuable resource worth bookmarking.

HR professionals assist their organizations by ensuring compliance with a wide range of federal statutes and implementing regulations. The following federal law digest brings together the fundamentals of federal employment laws HR professionals working in the public or private sectors need to be familiar with.

- [Age Discrimination in Employment Act \(ADEA\) of 1967](#)
- [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009](#)
- [American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012](#)
- [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) of 1990](#)
- [Black Lung Benefits Act \(BLBA\)](#)
- [Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 \(CHIPRA\)](#)
- [Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act \(COBRA\) of 1986](#)
- [Copeland Act of 1934](#)
- [Consumer Credit Protection Act \(CCPA\) of 1968](#)
- [Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act \(CWHSSA\)](#)
- [Davis Bacon Act of 1931](#)
- [Dodd-Frank Act of 2011](#)
- [Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988](#)
- [Employee Polygraph Protection Act \(EPPA\) of 1988](#)
- [Employee Retirement Income Security Act \(ERISA\) of 1974](#)
- [Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act \(EEOICPA\)](#)
- [Equal Pay Act \(EPA\) of 1963](#)
- [Executive Order 11246 of 1965](#)
- [Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003 \(FACT\)](#)
- [Fair Credit Reporting Act \(FCRA\) of 1969](#)
- [Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\) of 1938](#)
- [Family and Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\) of 1993](#)
- [Federal Corrupt Practices Act of 1977 \(FCPA\)](#)
- [Federal Employees' Compensation Act \(FECA\)](#)
- [Federal Insurance Contributions Act \(FICA\) of 1935](#)
- [Federal Mine Safety and Health Act \(Mine Act\)](#)

- [Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act \(GINA\) of 2008](#)
- [Health Care Education and Reconciliation Act of 2010](#)
- [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act \(HIPAA\) of 1996](#)
- [Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 \(IRCA\)](#)
- [Immigration and Nationality Act \(INA\)](#)
- [Jury Service and Selection Act](#)
- [Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act \(LMRDA\)](#)
- [Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009](#)
- [Longshore and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act \(LHWCA\)](#)
- [McNamara-O'Hara Service Contract Act \(SCA\)](#)
- [Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008](#)
- [Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act \(MSPA\)](#)
- [National Labor Relations Act \(NLRA\) of 1947](#)
- [Newborns' and Mothers' Health Protection Act of 1996](#)
- [Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932](#)
- [Occupational Safety and Health Act \(OSHA\) of 1970](#)
- [Older Workers Benefit Protection Act of 1990 \(OWBPA\)](#)
- [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010](#)
- [Pension Protection Act of \(PPA\) 2006](#)
- [Pregnancy Discrimination Act](#)
- [Section 503 Rehabilitation Act as amended in 2013](#)
- [Sarbanes-Oxley Act \(SOX\) of 2002](#)
- [Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890](#)
- [Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#)
- [Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures of 1978](#)
- [Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act \(USERRA\) of 1994](#)
- [Vietnam-Era Veterans Readjustment Act \(VEVRA\) of 1974](#)
- [Walsh-Healey Act of 1936](#)
- [War Hazards Compensation Act of 1942](#)
- [Women's Health & Cancer Rights Act of 1998](#)
- [Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act \(WARN\) of 1988](#)
- [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\) of 2014](#)

Federal Agency Guidance

Department of Labor Ruling, Interpretation and Opinion Letters

Please consult with an attorney before you rely on any DOL Opinion Letters, ruling, or interpretation as the DOL issues new regulations and guidance from time to time.

DOL rulings and interpretations cover the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), as well as various other labor and wage and hour related matters.

You can access them at <http://www.dol.gov/whd/opinion/opinion.htm>.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Informal Discussion Letters

These letters are answers to companies that have posed specific questions to the EEOC, and they are intended to answer only that question for that company. The opinions expressed by the EEOC in these letters are not meant to provide legal opinions for the general public.

The letters cover Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII, as well as various other federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.

You can access them at <http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/foia/letters/index.cfm> (n. p.).

As this page clearly illustrates, employment law is very extensive and while you do not need to have a full understanding of all of the laws, you should at least be aware they exist and have a cursory understanding of them. Again, SHRM may be a good option for professional development in this area.

Labor Relations

Labor is the most significant cost for community colleges, and therefore this area requires considerable time and attention. Unions and tenure laws have significant impact on what you can and cannot effect with human resource policy and initiatives. The most frequent advice relative to human resources was to know your union contracts well, and to understand tenure laws.

The number of unions vary significantly among institutions, and can include units such as full-time faculty, adjuncts, police, and service staff. One institution reported seven unions, and one as few as two. Not only do union contracts dictate daily operations relative to what you can ask staff to do, but they also require negotiation time and intermittent meetings between contracts. Depending on the institution, and the president, the CBO may or may not be involved

in a significant number of negotiations, but she or he will be involved in the development of the economic packages.

A word about union negotiations, also called collective bargaining, may be helpful here. There are a number of ways you can bargain a contract, but a couple of the more prevalent ways are traditional bargaining and interest-based bargaining. Traditional bargaining is what most people probably think about when they hear union negotiations mentioned. In this method, positions are exchanged and considered, and the parties each vie for their position to be accepted. In the economic sense, there is a high-low approach, and the parties meet up somewhere in the middle. So, if the union wants a 3% raise, they may come in asking for a 5% raise, while the administration comes in with a 1% proposal; then eventually the parties decide on a 3% raise. In interest-based bargaining, sometimes called win-win, the parties define and share their interests; i.e., what do they want to change or initiate; then they brainstorm solutions and attempt to find one that satisfies both parties. In terms of economics, information is shared regarding the financial position of the college, and the parties attempt to agree on a reasonable solution. Experience has taught me that relationships are often preserved and can even be enhanced with interest-based bargaining but are often challenged and sometimes severed with traditional bargaining.

If the culture and history at your institution is in traditional based bargaining, and if you think interest-based bargaining may be beneficial, understand that the first step will be education. If there is any interest among the faculty team and the administration to explore interest-based bargaining, there is free training from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS). The parties typically participate in joint training to understand the process and the environment in which the interest-based bargaining is most likely to be successful. For example, there has to

be a fairly high level of trust between faculty and administration. If the relationship is acrimonious, this process will not likely work. If, after training and consideration, both parties agree to try interest-based bargaining, I would suggest asking an FMCS representative to facilitate the bargaining sessions, at least for the first time you use the process. This service is also free at this time. The representative will serve to keep the parties on track with the process. If she or he perceives that the process is not working, they may suggest a reversion to traditional based bargaining. Know also that for economic issues, the parties often revert to traditional bargaining even when the rest of the contract is negotiated with interest-based bargaining. This is not a failure; it is normal and should be accepted as such.

Managing Employee Discord

Another way to use the interest-based approach is when employee conflict arises. Having each party reduce their interests to writing, and then sharing those interests with both parties present often will reveal some areas of commonality on which to build a solution to the conflict. If you try this method, let the parties brainstorm the solutions after defining areas of common interest and just be a guiding voice if they stray from the exercise. It may take a couple of sessions before they arrive at an acceptable solution, but the exercise in and of itself can help repair or build a relationship. It is likely that you would only be involved in higher level employee conflict that has not found resolution with your human resources manager, so care must be taken, especially if both employees are longer term that you have a vested interest in keeping as a part of your organization.

Sometimes an unhappy employee will exhaust the attempts with his or her supervisor and human resources manager to resolve their issue and it will be escalated to you. One useful tactic with this is to first listen, then ask the employee to reduce to writing what is causing the problem.

Be upfront and tell them you will help them fix whatever can be resolved, and then they can either accept what cannot be changed with a positive attitude, or you will assist them in finding other opportunities outside the organization.

On occasion, you will have an employee who is simply the proverbial square peg in a round hole within the organization. They have talent and skills, but their passion is not with the position they currently hold.

I recall when we hired Sue. Her resume was stellar, and the search committee overwhelmingly recommended her as their first choice for a research assistant. Sue accepted the position but eventually it was clear that her work was subpar for the research team and she was obviously unhappy. Sue had become a mentee of mine, so I met with her and we explored her situation together. In the course of conversation, she revealed that she wanted to work in higher education, but that students were her passion, and she did not fit in well in the research department. I was aware that we would soon be searching for an advisor in student services, and eventually we were able to help her move to that position, where she was very successful for several years.

Sometimes listening and adjusting accordingly makes a difference between a failed employee and one who thrives.

Be aware, however, that if you have an employee who is not performing well and is simply negative in general, it may not be possible to resolve the situation in this way. Obviously, an attitude adjustment is needed, and the employee should be given every opportunity to improve, but if these things do not happen, perhaps it is time to reconsider their staying at your institution. Some administrators decide to move the person to another department where they will do better and perhaps have a more positive attitude. Be cautious with this — moving a negative person around the organization may not be the solution; helping them find opportunity

elsewhere can be. Before you think this is a harsh or negative action, understand that many employees have returned to previous employers to indicate helping them leave was the best thing that could have happened; they have found happiness and fulfillment in their new position elsewhere.

Finally, recognize in the area of human resources you will never make everyone happy all of the time. Humans have varying interests and when you satisfy one group, for example by implementing a policy to offer free tuition to dependents, you may dissatisfy another, perhaps single people who now wonder what benefit they will get in lieu of that since they have no dependents. I am reminded of the adage “no good deed goes unpunished”; very true in human resources.

At my institution, we periodically compare our human resources policies to those of our peer institutions. During one of our routine reviews, we became aware that the vacation time accrual for supportive staff was not as robust as that of our counterparts. We decided to implement a policy that would allow them to accrue more vacation days in a shorter amount of years, and increase the cap on the number of days that may be accumulated as well. I recall that a long-time employee with full vacation benefits was in my office the next day complaining that it took more years for him to get the maximum vacation benefit; why should others be allowed to get it earlier? I listened to him and then explained that making improvements for others took nothing away from him, and that for us to improve policies we needed to find a point in time to progress else we would never make changes. He still was not happy; in fact, he was the same guy who complained we ‘took away his parking space’ when we went from designated to zoned parking. As long as some people see the glass as half-empty, HR can never make everyone happy with any given policy.

One CBO cited that human resources takes a disproportionate share of time, and this will likely prove out to be the case for any CBO whose division includes this department.

Technology

This is another area that not every CBO supervises, but merits mention because many do have this responsibility in their divisions. This is probably also another area of cursory education and perhaps some level of experience from the software implementation perspective.

Technology Master Plan

CBOs who oversee technology share that a technology plan, much like a facilities master plan, is needed as a blueprint for moving forward. The plan should be updated regularly, and the team that does so should be a cross-functional team, not just technology staff. Also, technology should only be adopted for the benefit of the users, not for technology sake. Technology is expensive, and remember that the more you adopt, the more replacement costs you will have over time. Still, in some sense it is like water — a necessary component for survival. Without current technology, your graduates may not be prepared to enter the workforce and your staff may be less efficient than if they had current software.

Technology Change Management

An important element with technology is that sometimes a change, for example in enterprise systems, will have significant impact on nearly the entire organization. For a change of this magnitude, it is important to understand change management models and adopt one that is appropriate to the magnitude of change. One may do well to study Kotter's model of change management for this type of project but understand the steps must be executed well and in the general order specified. Because there can be emotional impact with an enterprise-wide change, also consider running Kotter's methodology in tandem with a more people-oriented approach, such as Bridge's transition model. A brief description of these change management models can be found in *A Comparison of 5 Popular Change Models for Managing Business Change* (2013).

Remember that systems and processes are important, but they were built by and will be rebuilt by people; don't overlook the human aspect of change management.

Auxiliary Services

Auxiliary services may also fall under your area of leadership, and depending on the size of institution, you may have direct responsibility for some or all of these services for which a fee is typically charged and for which the objective is for most services to be self-supporting. The CBO may have responsibility for units such as food service, child care centers, the bookstore, conference centers, print shops, and mailroom activities. Responsibility might also be shared with another division, most likely student services for athletics, student life activities, and possibly residence halls. Contractual arrangements may be appropriate for some of the auxiliary enterprises, such as food service (if no culinary program exists) and the bookstore. The National Association of College Auxiliary Services, which also has regional organizations, provides training and conferences for developing auxiliary services staff.

While other functional units may fall under your leadership, the aforementioned are the most common and this writing will be limited to those.

Time Management

The career path you are considering or have chosen will frequently present challenges in how you should spend your time, and you may often wish there were more hours in the day. The primary functions on which CBOs spend their time varied considerably among the respondents. Personnel and finance were primary, with facilities and construction also mentioned. To some extent it likely depends on time of year. For example, during budget preparation season, a fair share of time will be devoted to that endeavor. In times of negotiation, if you are involved, that also takes focus and time. Making sure your direct reports are well trained and competent to

handle their own areas matters, especially during seasonal busy times. Coach your team and provide them professional development opportunities to help them grow and continually expand their capabilities.

While individual or divisional teamwork is most common, a close second is committee and meeting times, on which respondent CBOs spend an estimated ten to thirty hours per week. Meetings consume about half of a CBOs time during the normal work hours, and the meetings vary considerably among respondents. All indicated they meet with the president, the executive team, and direct reports on a weekly or biweekly basis. Beyond that, meetings varied and included:

- Board meetings and Board committees: audit, finance, policy, facilities
- General institutional: strategic planning, communications, accreditation
- Finance: budget, capital, innovations
- Risk management: business continuity, safety and security
- Computer related: administrative systems; Payment Card Industry compliance
- Labor: insurance oversight, labor and management, shared governance

There were various others mentioned only once, but the list once again underscores the breadth of the position, and the respect for the CBO participation and input. Leadership and participation in committees is an effective means for having significant impact on the direction of your institution, so consider committee opportunities as a place for your voice to have impact, and prepare and participate in them accordingly.

An important part of committee work is ensuring that outcomes are accomplished. Accordingly, an agenda should be prepared thoughtfully, and minutes should be recorded at every committee meeting you lead. Some institutions have a standardized template that is used for all committees. If yours does not, consider adopting a template that includes fields for

decisions made, responsible person, timeline, and communication plan. Begin your next meeting by cycling back to previous minutes to ensure designated actions were taken on all outstanding items before you move to new agenda items. Employees are appreciative when this happens, and frustrated when items are left undone, so it is a good practice to adopt.

A word of caution may be helpful regarding time management. As the CBO, vendors and salespersons will perceive you as a decision-maker regarding purchases, and this, to a large extent, is true. While you want to maintain good relationships with current and potential vendors to the extent their products or services are desirable for your institution, be prepared to choose wisely when it comes to how much time you allocate to meetings with vendors. Your assistant can be of tremendous value with the overwhelming number of telephone calls from vendors. You may want to only publish his or her phone number externally, and reserve your direct line for established relationships. Your assistant, once you've set the parameters, can determine which calls to put through, and which can be handled without your involvement. It is highly unlikely that you will have the time or the desire to speak with all vendors, and they deserve to be handled respectfully; give your assistant latitude and respect his or her judgment on this issue.

The Non-technical Skills CBOs Find of Most Value

As stated before, most CBOs come with a finance or accounting background. I have known a few with other backgrounds, most notably technology and human resources. Each comes with their set of technical skills, but CBOs find that in their generalist roles, the importance of non-technical skills can outweigh their technical backgrounds.

Human Relation Skills

People skills are important at any level, in any profession. CBOs expressed various areas in which their people skills were important to their work. Management of people, and working

collaboratively in internal teams and with external constituents were specifically cited as important. Managing people requires the ability to effectively to communicate to motivate, provide feedback, and sometimes discipline others. Working collaboratively requires a number of skills including communication, tolerance, reliability, compromise, and teamwork. One CBO relayed her experience with a team approach to implementing an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system:

The most effective team collaboration I ever experienced was when my college was implementing enterprise-wide software. It was a significant project that would impact nearly every department in some way. We decided to approach project management as a team of six, comprised of leadership from different functional areas of the college and technology services. When we signed up for project management training with the software company, they advised against a team approach, suggesting one or two people should lead and be held accountable. We decided to stay with our original approach and share the responsibility and accountability. Throughout the two-year implementation, we worked many long days together, sharing successes, spirited discussions, and sometimes tears. Our group had developed a strong sense of trust; we knew we could rely on one another and that all team members were equally valued. The project was a success; the system was fully functional in the promised timeframe.

Writing Skills

Writing ability is another skill that is essential for any position, but for the CBO is it absolutely critical given the types of documents this position produces that are often disseminated without further review. Written documents can range from communication to all employees regarding human resource policies or the current budgetary situation, to legislative responses and trustee reports. Writing is a skill that appears not as carefully studied as it once was, as grammar and structure are sometimes lacking even in documents prepared by staff with

graduate degrees. A practice you may want to consider is that when you prepare a written document, do so well before any deadline. Set it aside for a day, and read it again. The time between the readings allows your mind to reset, and you will often notice something that needs revision. Pay attention to the structure — does the order of your thoughts make sense? This is important in narrative work, but also in charts, graphs, and financial schedules. If the item is a standard report, each time you prepare it consider whether you can improve it.

I used a standard item and supporting schedules for years when presenting tuition increases to the president, student senate, and the Board of Trustees for consideration. I had inherited the structure from my predecessor, and it seemed to be effective. However, when I reviewed it this year, I changed the choice of information presented on the supporting document. The Board finance committee was pleased, (which means the president loved it too), and indicated the information was more useful than that previously included. It is important to regularly review reports and continue to enhance them over time when warranted.

Another element regarding written reports is to be mindful of the reader(s) of your document and their background knowledge. You may need to add context or consider the vocabulary you use. Often CBOs are working with complex information that they need to present in a simplified way, in common terminology. Consider utilizing your team members to help with proofreading and to provide you an honest opinion on whether the information you are sharing is easily comprehended. It is helpful to have someone review documents covering subject matter with which they are not familiar, if your intended audience also has limited knowledge of the topic. If your writing skills are lacking, take advantage of professional development opportunities at your institution. Your writing skills will be widely observed, and they will affect the perception others have of you, so further develop this skill if needed.

Reading and Analytical Skills

Strong reading and analytical skills are also important for success in the CBO position. Laws and regulations must be thoroughly understood and often must be operationalized into policies. Thorough reading, not just going out to the internet for isolated pieces of information, is a practice with which some incoming employees simply are not experienced. The internet has proven valuable in a myriad of ways, and many in recent generations have become used to searching for an immediate response to what they need to know at that moment. This will not suffice when it is your responsibility to read and interpret a particular law and determine its impact on your college.

Presentation Skills

Presentation skills are also essential in this position. Although communication about the general finances of the institution, and any legislative changes thereto, should be shared regularly, it is during times of financial difficulty that the CBO is often called upon to make presentations. These may be internal for staff and faculty, or external with area constituents as in the case of a bond referendum or campaign for a tax levy increase. It will be important for any presentation, save for those with colleagues, that you are able to stop speaking in technical terms and translate the information into widely understood common language. This is true not only for presentations, but for conversations and meetings with your president and Board. Provide only as much detail as is merited and link your desired outcome to information with which they already have familiarity whenever possible. This will aid audience comprehension, which can make your argument more compelling.

While public speaking may rank highest among your fears, as is quite common in the general public, recognize it is a requisite component of the job. You may need to get professional

help if this skill is not in your repertoire, but the good news is you work at a college that employs speech teachers who are generally empathetic to your plight and who are likely willing to do some private coaching. Take advantage of this resource, and remember to send at minimum an appreciative note for their help.

Leading Across Generations

Leading across the generations is becoming more important as multiple generations now are in coexistence in most colleges, and their styles can be very different. From the traditionalist era of self-sufficient workers, the baby-boomers classified largely as workaholics, to the more recent generation X and millennials, there are differences in work approaches of which you need to be aware to most effectively work with and lead your staff and colleagues. Since millennials are the generation coming into the workforce in growing numbers, knowing the work characteristics of this generation may be particularly helpful to you. Much literature is available, some of it not terribly complimentary to this generation. One study that provides a balanced approach to millennials in the workplace is the research from Myers and Sadaghiani (2010), *Millennials in the Workplace: A Communication Perspective on Millennials' Organizational Relationships and Performance*. Here is an excerpt from their conclusions:

As we have suggested, Millennials are likely to be acutely affected by globalization, communication and information technologies, economics, and socialization by very involved parents. They are likely to have different, often broader, perspectives about the world marketplace, supervisor-subordinate relationships, cultural diversity, performance of tasks, and ways that communication and information technologies can be used to enhance organizational performance and to maximize productivity. Many of these Millennial stances and behaviors can be viewed by organizations as opportunities rather than obstacles. The key for coworkers from older generations — especially those in positions of formal and informal power in organizations — will be interacting with

Millennials with a desire to understand, rather than with the aim of criticizing how Millennials are different. (p. 235)

The researcher is of the baby boom generation, and as I reflect on the early days in my career, I was probably viewed in much the same way Millennials are now. I was first to bring computerized spreadsheets to my institution, and I recall the director of technology fuming that I was consuming too much of the available computer resources for my work. An early supervisor in the generation before me, who never listened to my ideas because “we’ve always done it this way,” was the impetus for me returning to school for an advanced degree so I could lead my own team. I suspect those of us who precede the Millennials take time to reflect on our own experiences, there might be a broader understanding and empathy for this new generation that is considered so very different in their approach to work and life.

Building Effective Teams

Building effective teams takes thoughtful effort, smart hiring, and developing the right environment in which teams will be successful. There are many levels of teams, from your direct reports to ad hoc teams you may form to tackle a certain problem or move a specific initiative forward. Conant (2012) summarizes the steps in team building as follows:

- Hire highly effective team members;
- focus on inspiring trust;
- encourage candor;
- and be clear about expectations. (n. p.)

There is much literature on this topic of which you can avail yourself, but this is a general, high level summary of important steps.

Building your Team of Direct Reports

In terms of building your team of direct reports, one of my mentors counseled me to “hire smart people and get out of their way and be ready to support them whenever they need you.” It is important that in developing this team, which will to an extent define your ability to be effective, that you consider the talent and characteristics that will be of most benefit to the institution. There is always an element of “fit: as well; i.e., will the potential employee fit in with the rest of the team? You can hire a very smart person but if their style does not mesh with the others on the team, the result may not be what you intended. Be careful about the cultural fit as well. While you want to hire candidates who will move their areas forward, you also want to consider whether their experiences will mesh well with your organization. You want them to bring ideas, but also to recognize that your culture will be different, and they will need to operate within it.

Ad Hoc Team Building

One of the most important elements about building ad hoc teams is the membership on the team. Once you have developed a clear vision about what you need a team to accomplish, consider who would provide the best perspectives and skill sets to reach the goal. A good team will have diversity of thought and complimentary skill sets. What positions that are invited to serve will depend largely on the breadth of the goal and the nature of it. Take time to consider who the stakeholders are who will be impacted. Include those who can move the project forward, and include those who will be directly affected by the outcome. Consider all levels of employees, and include students if appropriate as well.

A Note on Diversity

As stated earlier, leadership among many colleges is largely comprised of middle-aged, middle-to-upper socioeconomic, white people. Give some thought to the fact, then, that Boards of Trustees and senior administrators from this background may be making decisions about populations with which they have limited understanding. One CBO who served on a United Way Board shared his experience:

Some of the most critical work we did as Board members was to vote on the allocation of funds raised to the organizations we support. We did this during "Hell week," a week devoted to hearing the needs during presentations by each organization, and then on the last day we agreed to not leave the meeting room until the vote was settled. I recall being less supportive of one of the proposed programs for funding and was honestly surprised by the passionate outpouring of emotion by the lone African American on the Board when we considered not funding the program. She took the time to help us understand the importance of the programming to a very poor African American community that she served in various ways and of which she had a far broader understanding than the rest of the group. We funded the program, and I remember recording in my mind how critically important it is to ensure diversity in membership for any team formed in the future.

I am a voice of diversity on our leadership team, which is not diverse, reminding them that we are not always the best group to make decisions affecting our student body with growing numbers of minority students. I personally believe there is much to be researched on diversifying community college Boards of Trustees; perhaps if you someday pursue a doctoral degree and are searching for a topic, and if you have the same passion about this, there is your topic!

Making Decisions

Decision-making skills are a must at the executive level. Decisions will range from the most simple, such as whether a staff member may participate in a particular event during work hours, to the complex, such as whether to proceed with a major project, or whether to close for a weather-related event. The most difficult decisions in today's environment revolve around the safety of the students and employees, such as bomb threats. The president will likely make the final decision on how to handle this level of threat, but she will rely on you for supporting information and perhaps recommendations, particularly if you supervise campus safety.

Decisions may be made for the short-term, or for the long-term, and it is very important to distinguish between the two. A short-term solution may have unintended consequences in the long run.

Increasing enrollment has been the highest concern of the Board and president for the past two years. The recruiter coordinator position recently became vacant, and the search team recommended a candidate who would command a salary far above the level normally paid for the coordinator level. They made a case for a higher salary, supported by the human resources director, based on the gravity of low enrollments. I did not allow the higher salary, as the problem they were trying to resolve was short-term. Enrollments are typically counter cyclical to the improving economy, and this is what is happening in our environment at the moment. When this cycle is over and enrollments improve, we would have saddled ourselves with an ongoing internal equity problem among coordinator salaries. The short-term solution would have had negative internal consequences in the long term.

An important consideration in making decisions that impact other areas is the timing of the decision. CBOs may tend to focus on the fiscal calendar when planning projects or making other budgetary decisions. For the human resources function, however, it may make more sense

to implement decisions based on the calendar year, when benefits and tax rates change. The academic calendar is yet another consideration. For projects that affect classrooms, a long lead time is required if the academic team has specific plans for utilization of that space for programming. The marketing team may also be planning well in advance and may need financial information on specific timetables that are not in the typical fiscal calendar. It is helpful to develop a master calendar for the year and insert dates when specific types of decisions need to be made and associated information provided to colleagues.

When you make decisions of any complexity, you should be as informed as feasible given any time constraints, and consider viewing the decision from different lenses. Consider thinking about the decision from these perspectives:

- Social — how will the decision affect students; the campus community; the broader community?
- Mission — will the decision be aligned with the mission of the institution?
- Ethical — does the decision align with your ethical standards? Is it the ‘right’ thing to do?
- Economic — are there economic considerations for any constituent group?
- Legal — is the proposed solution legal and moral?

Engage your closest advisors, share your decision intent and get feedback, and if the decision has impact outside your division, share your plan with the president to ensure she is supportive of the direction you are taking. Be aware that decisions should also be appropriate for the current community college environment, which is changing and evolving perhaps more now than at any other time since the inception of community colleges.

The Changing Environment of the Community College Sector

There have been significant changes in the community college sector and in the role of the CBO in recent years. It is important to understand the changing world in which you have chosen to spend your career. Some of the changes cited in the environment include:

- Community colleges used to work in a world of relative financial abundance; now the system is adjusting to financial scarcity
- Social media has impacted decision making and public relations
- There has been a shift from employee privileges to employee 'rights'
- The required investment in technology is much more mission critical
- More regulation and accountability; increasingly complex environment
- Difficulty in planning due to funding stream uncertainty

In terms of the CBO role itself, the following changes were noted:

- With limited resources and staff reductions, taking on more roles and responsibilities
- Less travel and more training via webinars
- The amount of time spent on communicating financial matters to the public, written and oral has increased
- Expectations are now that CBOs are campus leaders well beyond money
- CBO has become a knowledge source of much and master of nothing
- Role has transitioned from an expert of finance to a generalist and advisor
- Leadership responsibilities in an increasing number of areas requires considerably more time in professional development

It is a time in our history that many states have divested in higher education, and that the general public has begun to question the value of a college degree. Legislatures and accrediting bodies are requiring higher levels of accountability, and higher education is strategizing how to reinvent the systems to become more accountable for completion rates and resource consumption. States

are competing with one another for limited populations of students, and more competitors are entering the market in the form of competency based and for-profit institutions. In many states, the legislature or higher education governing bodies are reconstituting college systems, some realigning community colleges with universities, and some allowing expansion of community colleges into the baccalaureate degrees, particularly in applied fields. Many states have also adopted some iteration of performance-based funding, targeting community college work to specific outcomes. Within community colleges, a major shift at this time is toward guided pathways, as a way to increase completion and align education with the workforce.

Apprenticeships and competency-based learning are also growing options as colleges seek innovative ways to provide education in a more robust economy with higher employment levels.

It is an unsettling time, and one of increased complexity and scarcity of resources to meet the demands of the various constituent groups. An incoming CBO needs to understand the changes that are happening in the industry and to be a collaborative leader in transformational change as community colleges seek to navigate the challenges. The CBO must ensure that time is spent understanding the broader scope of the community college environment to enable them to be a full collaborative leader.

Future Challenges — What's on the Horizon?

Just a reminder for this section, the survey respondents were Illinois CBOs, and the state recently experienced a near two-year period without a budget, during which higher education was significantly challenged to maintain operations in a way that continued to meet their missions.

Thus, funding from the state level was the most often stated future challenge among the respondents. This situation is not limited to Illinois, as many states disinvested in higher

education during the great recession of 2008. A related challenge is in the realm of forecasting; how can multi-year plans strategic plans, facility or technology plans be prepared in a reasonably confident manner when funding streams are uncertain? Enrollment, lack thereof was also cited; according to the last published fall enrollment data from the Illinois Community College Board website, the fall term full-time equivalent enrollments dropped from the peak of 224,676 in fall 2010 to 176,797 in fall 2016, a drop of more than 21%. This translates not only to a problem with state funding that is credit hour based, but tuition revenues as well.

CBOs are also concerned about reinventing their institutions so that students of this era see a compelling reason to achieve a college credential. Community colleges need to stay relevant and affordable while offering academic programs that pertain to student and workforce needs. Our institutions need to be nimble and proactive in understanding the current and future needs for economic development of our districts and be a partner with the chambers of commerce and economic development groups in our areas. Value in the service we deliver to students and the workforce is key, and degrees or stackable certificates that can be achieved in shorter time periods to allow movement to the next level or job is one area in which we can make progress.

Many CBOs are considering whether the current system is sustainable. Illinois has 39 independent districts and 48 community colleges. The collective administrative structure is collapsing, with positions reduced and remaining employees absorbing more roles. Some institutions are finding that attracting quality human resources in the Illinois environment can also be a significant challenge, given the current financial environment in which not only are colleges experiencing reduced funding, but the pension system is also woefully underfunded, the legislature continues to threaten eliminating funding for community college retiree health

insurance, and an onerous “6% rule” in the pension legislation either limits salary increases or causes additional liability to the community college that provides promotions with commensurate salary increases.

The legislatures in various states are calling for more efficiency in higher education. As community colleges were created with a broad mission, and in some states governed locally, they tried to be all things for all constituents. The development of the system saw duplication in educational programming at institutions that are in reasonably close proximity. In Illinois, another inefficiency has resulted from the technology infrastructure being independently developed or adopted at each college, resulting in each college hiring technology staffs to manage the software, and limited opportunity for sharing developments. Some states adopted a unified technology system and manage the system from a central office, ostensibly resulting in less cost and more comparable data.

The challenge is in how to realign higher education for more efficiency. There is some thought to consolidation, as has happened in the K-12 sector in Illinois. This move is challenged by the local governing structures; giving up control of a college that was built and supported by taxpayer funds will be a significant paradigm shift, and one that voters will need to be convinced to support with compelling arguments. Other states have adopted or developed proposals for consolidation of colleges, or of governing boards, or both. We will explore a few of them here to illustrate the possibilities of meeting the challenge in Illinois and in other states that have yet to take action.

In 1997, Kentucky realigned the community colleges that were then run by the University of Kentucky with the technical college system, creating the Kentucky Community and Technical

College System. Smith (2017) reports that the number of presidents has dropped from 28 to 16 and access and enrollment have increased.

In the small state of Connecticut, there are currently twelve independent community colleges, four within a twelve-mile radius. Thomas (2018) shares that the system will take a \$10 million, or 7% cut in the next fiscal year, which she cites as just the latest reduction in a number of years. Enrollment declines exacerbate the situation, resulting in less tuition revenue as well. There is a plan under consideration to consolidate the twelve colleges into one college with twelve campuses, and dramatically reduce the collective administrative structure, a move which is projected to save \$28 million.

Ballard (2017) reports that the Louisiana Community and Technical College System Board has approved the realignment of eight campuses to reduce administrative costs and allow for more efficient instruction. The system has experienced sixteen successive state budget cuts over eight years, totaling \$82 million, with major impact, as the entire budget for the twelve public community colleges and technical schools is about \$195 million. The current realignment plan is expected to save about \$10 million.

The University of Wisconsin News (2017) released a report that indicate all two-year campuses in Wisconsin will be realigned with four-year university campuses in 2018. The article cites “The proposed restructuring will allow the UW System to better address current and projected enrollment and financial challenges at the two-year institutions, while maintaining the important UW presence in local communities” (n. p.). Economic development groups and business and industry often have developed strong partnerships with community colleges, and any attempt at realignment must consider these strategic partnerships and how the community college is currently meeting local workforce needs.

In other states, such as Illinois, legislation has been introduced to consolidate the coordinating boards of community colleges and universities in an attempt to provide a centralized structure for reinventing a more efficient system of higher education.

As you may surmise from this section, the skills you will need far more than technical skills to help lead your institution into the future.

Leadership Skills

CBOs were asked their opinion about what leadership skills they deemed essential for the role, and how they would suggest new CBOs would best develop those skills. Most responded that the leadership skills for the CBO role are general in nature and are therefore applicable far beyond the CBO role. Development of these skills takes time and experience, and achievement is an ongoing endeavor. Common leadership skills, such as listening, communicating with the audience in mind, being ethical, having self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses, and having the ability to motivate others toward the mission, were shared by many respondents.

One experienced CBO who consistently studies the science of leadership suggested that Level 5 leadership as espoused by Jim Collins, is a good model to emulate, and I believe worth consideration. If you haven't read the book *Good to Great*, I commend it for your reading. Also, it may be beneficial for you to study Level 5 characteristic leadership traits, which include humility, will, ferocious resolve, and the tendency to give credit to others while assigning blame to themselves. While there are any number of leadership models you may choose to follow, these characteristics would still be desirable for any effective leader.

Another experienced colleague shared a thought that resonated deeply with me, when he stated that the CBO needs to be the "calm in the storm." This is true regardless if the situation is a security situation, a union strike situation, or even a fiscal crisis.

I recall the fiscal year when my campus experienced a drop in state funding from \$7 million to less than \$1 million, in the span of a year with no forewarning. As the CBO it was my role to develop strategies for getting our institution through this period in a fiscally responsible manner and to communicate to the college community regarding the situation we were in and how we would manage it. As I was preparing to address an assembly of faculty, my president reminded me how important it was for the audience to perceive that I had the situation under control.

Llopis (2014) suggests practical ways to maintain composure in difficult situations:

- Don't allow your emotions to get in the way;
- don't take things personally;
- keep a positive mental attitude;
- remain fearless;
- respond decisively;
- take accountability; and
- act like you have been there before. (pp. 4-10)

As to how to develop leadership skills, having a mentor was often suggested by respondents. Mentors can not only give you sage advice, but they can make professional connections for you that can help move you along your career trajectory more smoothly. Another approach is to get feedback from those you serve, in the form of a 360 degree evaluation process; if your institution does not have a formal process for this, you can independently initiate it for yourself by distributing an evaluation document to various constituents across the institution with whom you have a working relationship and would therefore be in a position to provide you feedback on which you can continue to build your skills. Other ideas to aid in your leadership development included reading relevant books and articles on leadership and joining professional

organizations. One great comment was “don’t just hang out with the bean counters”; i.e. expand your thinking beyond those who are similar to you.

The importance of getting outside the CBO world is worth underscoring. As a leader you need to know what is going on in the general world of higher education. Know what legislation and initiatives are underway at the state and national levels. If you are not familiar with the websites for the Association of Community Colleges, the Community College Research Center, or Association of Community College Trustees, to name a few, start spending some time reading about the important work that goes on at the national level. There is a plethora of information on these sites regarding such initiatives as Guided Pathways and Achieving the Dream. Become familiar to broaden your perspective and help you understand better the work of your colleagues.

Resources for Your Development as a CBO

An important aspect of working in any field, but especially in higher education, is continual learning and development. As a novice CBO you will bring your own unique combination of skills to the role, which will include technical and managerial skills and any others you have developed in previous roles. We all can and should avail ourselves to always broadening that skill set, no matter how much or little experience we have.

The CBOs surveyed for this writing were asked about what resources they believed were critical for their roles. The state organization, Illinois Community College Chief Financial Officers (ICCCFO), was a near universal answer. ICCCF0 has two three-day conferences, one in fall and one in spring, and well as an interim single-day gathering in the winter. At the conferences, about fifteen educational sessions are presented, specifically targeted to the community college CBO role. Sessions range from Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) updates to construction oversight, purchasing, human resources and insurance to name a

few. Presenters are typically vendors who do business with one of the colleges, and sometimes a college co-presents with the vendor. This provides a win-win situation in which vendors listen to each other's presentations and learn more about the sector they serve, while CBOs get updates and meet presenters with differing perspectives and ideas. The winter conference is primarily for legal, state, and retirement system updates and for networking. Whatever state you live in, you should check to see if there is a formal CBO group that you can join as soon as you assume the role. Also, check for a listserv; in Illinois, the CBO listserv is an often-used tool that provides immediate feedback on whatever topic a CBO wants to bring forth. The combination of the listserv and the conferences provides great support for novice and experienced CBOs in Illinois.

Another resource mentioned often is the Community College Business Officers (CCBO) organization, and in particular, their leadership academy. CCBO has an annual conference each fall at which educational sessions are provided and networking opportunities at the national level help broaden the perspective for participants. The leadership academy is a two-year program for new and aspiring CBOs. The website describes the academy as follows:

The Academy provides an opportunity for current and aspiring community college business officers to educate themselves on the various intricacies of Chief Business Officer leadership. The Academy's goal is to provide participants with the knowledge of the theories and practice of leadership within a community college as an institution of higher education. The Academy is designed to train the next generation of Chief Business Officers and to provide current leaders with updated information on national issues facing community colleges. (n. p.)

The program includes educational components, mentorship, and a project component in which theory is applied. The organization is targeted to community colleges, which is a benefit in that all participants are from the sector, and all materials presented are relevant.

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) was also cited as a valued resource. GFOA also has an annual educational conference, and their training offerings throughout the year are extensive. The GFOA website describes their mission for training:

Dedicated to the sound management of government financial resources, GFOA provides professional development training opportunities to more than 12,000 state and local finance professionals each year. Developed and taught by public finance experts, GFOA offers professional training through group-live courses held across the country and Internet-based courses. (n. p.)

The organization offers a good blend of technical training relative to accounting, investments, pensions, and similar issues, and leadership offerings in areas such as negotiations and communication. GFOA also provides best practices on a wide array of topics on their website, which are available to members and non-members alike. According to the website, “GFOA Best Practices identify specific policies and procedures that contribute to improved government management” (n. p.). CBOs are relied upon to develop policy and procedures for the areas they lead; GFOA is an invaluable resource for guidance as new policies and procedures are written, especially in those areas where your expertise is still developing. Of course, not all community colleges are structured as governmental agencies, so the relevance will vary.

The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), and the four associated regional organizations (CACUBO, EACUBO, WACUBO, and SACUBO) for central, eastern, western, and southern, are also valued resources for development, and for staying current. NACUBO publishes what some consider to be the “bible” for higher education business management: *College and University Business Administration*. The next edition is currently being written, and chapters are being made available online as they are completed. Various other publications on specific topics are also available on the website, which is worth

your time to explore. NACUBO also offers a series of programs for aspiring and new chief business officers in conjunction with its annual conference. The initial program is for those considering the role:

The Future Business Officers Program is a highly interactive one-day workshop designed for business office staff members to explore the leadership skills and organizational perspectives necessary to become a chief business officer. Participants will gain an understanding of the complex responsibilities of the chief business officer role and begin to develop a personal plan of action in preparation for a move to the next career level. (n. p.)

For those who believe they are nearing readiness for the role, there is a fellows program:

The NACUBO Fellows Program is a one-year leadership development program designed to provide support, education, and learning opportunities to individuals who seek a chief business officer position for their next role. Through access to experienced chief business officers, presidents, provosts, NACUBO experts, and other higher education leaders, the Fellows Program will provide participants with the opportunity to:

- Develop an understanding of the complexities of the chief business officer role
- Gain broad exposure to the field of higher education
- Understand the key competencies that are required for high performance as a chief business officer
- Enhance management, leadership, and communications skills
- Learn how veteran chief business officers have addressed institutional and professional challenges
- Build a network of colleagues who serve as a resource of support throughout the fellow's career. (n. p.)

For those who have advanced to the CBO role, there is additional programming:

The New Business Officers (NBO) Program is designed to provide resources, information and guidance to those new to the chief business officer role within a higher education setting. Throughout an intensive two-day workshop, participants will examine

the complexities of the role and learn from experienced chief business officers, presidents, provosts, NACUBO experts and other pivotal higher education representatives. Key issues for the success of every new business officer will be covered. Attendees will have many opportunities to network with colleagues and discuss the challenges facing business officers today. (n. p.)

The program is limited to CBOs who report directly to the president and have three years or less experience in the role. A helpful feature of NACUBO programming is an optional session designed for chief business officers who are new to the field of higher education. Higher education culture, along with topics and concepts found in higher education that are not common in the corporate or non-profit world are presented in this session. If you are new to higher education, this type of session will provide you valuable context for your role. One thing to consider is that NACUBO and the associated regional organizations serve all higher education sectors, so information is not targeted just for community colleges.

Another organization with training targeted to higher education administration, and cited by several survey respondents, is APPA: Leadership in Educational Facilities. APPA (no current meaning as an acronym, but formerly stood for Association of Physical Plant Administrators), provides a leadership program with four levels, beginning with individual development and culminating in organizational effectiveness:

The purpose of The Leadership Academy is to enhance and further develop leadership throughout the educational industry. The Leadership Academy provides opportunities for professionals to increase their awareness of industry issues, to learn the skills necessary to handle today's changes, and to discover the leadership potential within each of us.

The Leadership Academy has been developed for, and focuses on, the educational institution's administrative professionals. These include facilities staff, buyers/purchasing agents, business/finance professionals, and auxiliary services professionals. The program

is designed in levels, with each level emphasizing a different perspective and type of leadership skill. (n. p.)

APPA also has a good number of publications offered on its website, including the *Body of Knowledge*, a core resource for facilities management. Depending on your level of involvement in the facilities area, and especially if you have no background in this area, this is a resource that you may want to acquire. The book is comprised of the following areas:

- General Administration and Management
- Operations and Maintenance
- Energy, Utilities, and Environmental Stewardship
- Planning, Design, and Construction

With content that includes best practices and policies and procedures in this area in an online, searchable format, it can be a valuable resource for an area typically less familiar to new CBOs.

There are a number of programs and organizations not necessarily targeted to higher education, but to the development of the CFO profession. Certified public accountant societies, the Deloitte “CFO Transition Lab,” the Aspen Institute “Finance Leaders Fellowship,” and Stanford University’s “The Emerging CFO: Strategic Financial Leadership Program,” and in Canada, Queen’s School of Business “CFO: Leadership Beyond Finance Program,” are some that you may wish to explore. You will find links to each in the references section.

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) on Leadership

Recognizing that leadership requirements are subject to change, AACC published the second edition of the *AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders* in light of the significant number of pending retirements of presidents and other senior administrators, and the need to develop leaders ready to take on current challenges. The report begins with the

statement: “Institutional transformation cannot take place without the development and continual improvement of a college’s leadership” (p. 2). The report notes that “members of the community college community can lead from all levels but must be empowered to do so. The competencies provided will shift in importance depending on the leader’s position” (p. 5). The five AACC competencies for community college leaders include:

- **Organizational Strategy** — An effective community college leader promotes the success of all students, strategically improves the quality of the institution, and sustains the community college mission based on knowledge of the organization, its environment, and future trends.
- **Institutional Finance, Research, Fundraising, and Resource Management** — An effective community college leader equitably and ethically sustains people, processes, and information as well as physical and financial assets to fulfill the mission, vision, and goals of the community college.
- **Communication** — An effective community college leader uses clear listening, speaking, and writing skills to engage in honest, open dialogue at all levels of the college and its surrounding community; promotes the success of all students; ensures the safety and security of students and the surrounding college community; and sustains the community college mission.
- **Collaboration** — An effective community college leader develops and maintains responsive, cooperative, mutually beneficial, and ethical internal and external relationships that nurture diversity, promotes the success of all students, and sustains the community college mission.
- **Community College Advocacy** — An effective community college leader understands, commits to, and advocates for the mission, vision, and goals of the community college on the local, state, and national level. (pp. 6-11)

Specific competencies within each category are presented for three categories: emerging leaders, leaders in the first three years on the job, and leaders with more than three years’ of experience. Several national groups encompassing trustees, presidents, administrators, and faculty provided insights for the report. The emerging CBO should be aware of and engage in intentionally acquiring the competencies collaboratively developed by leading groups in higher education.

Additional Development Thoughts from CBOs

Embrace every experience offered to you, and assume it will have value for you at some point in the future. Examples of assignments experienced along the way, or as a CBO, include being an appellate “judge” for an age discrimination complaint filed by nursing students; assuming the role of acting CSSO in addition to the CBO responsibilities; providing leadership for a research department in disarray and being charged with improving the situation. I could add more here, but the point is that you might be asked to assume leadership for any situation that arises, and you can learn something from each that will broaden your leadership perspective.

Practice continual development and life-long learning for yourself and inspire it in your staff. CBOs have spent years reading technical material, and you need to continue this at whatever level your position requires. However, expand your mind beyond the CBO world and read more broadly on a variety of topics. An interesting addition to staff development is having a communal read of a particular book and including presentations on each chapter from staff members at your regular meetings. I have included a short bibliography of books in Attachment C for your consideration.

Consider becoming a Higher Learning Commission peer reviewer. HLC conducts institutional reviews with the assistance of peer reviewers. According to their website:

HLC relies upon the work of peer reviewers for its accrediting activities. These volunteers generously share their knowledge and experience to assure and advance institutional quality. HLC maintains a Peer Corps of approximately 1,600 faculty and administrators from institutions within the 19-state North Central region. The peer reviewers play an incredibly important role in all stages of the accreditation process. They are responsible for assuring that an institution is complying with the accreditation criteria as well as for helping an institution advance within the context of its own mission.
(n. p.)

Once you have a few years of experience at the CBO level, you should consider becoming an HLC peer reviewer. The benefit is that when you conduct reviews of other organizations, you will undoubtedly see something that you will want to replicate at your own institution.

An adage learned from a professor — “if you have to eat a frog, eat the frog for breakfast” — has become a standard in my division. Now, this can be taken a couple of ways and is often interpreted to mean if you have something difficult to do on your “to do” list, do it early in the day to get it off of your mind and off of your list. I suggest it also might mean that you should take development seriously early in your career. Don’t stay buried in the world of debits and credits; by now you likely have strong technical skills and will continue to develop those as situations evolve. However, don’t wait until you have a higher-level position to give serious study to leadership and the associated skills; start now. Also, if you aspire to a higher-level position than you are in now, consider pursuing an advanced degree earlier rather than later. A wise mentor encouraged me to get a master’s degree when I had two very young children at home, as she advised me that I would become a taxi service for years once they were in school; this became reality, and I was glad I took her advice. Eat the frog for breakfast!

Conclusion

The role of the community college CBO is a rewarding one, in that joining in the mission of educating the leaders of tomorrow is a worthy, intrinsically rewarding cause. Careers in the community college sector are about service for the greater good, and in knowing that lives are being changed through the journey of education. As a CBO it is important that you are aware that you are doing more than creating reports and building buildings; you are changing lives.

This primer is designed to help you become acclimated to the role more quickly and effectively. There is much more that could go into such a guide but think of it as the ‘quick start’

document you get with a new computer — this information scratches the surface, but there is much more to know. Still, you should now have a concept of what the role entails and how to begin the journey as a community college CBO, as advised by those experienced in the role. I wish you success as your career progresses.

Attachment A: Sample Position Description

ABC COMMUNITY COLLEGE POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: Chief Business Officer **DATE:** XXXX

DIVISION: Finance and Administration **REPORTS TO:** President

CLASSIFICATION: Administration **SUPERVISES:**
Dir., Finance and Accounting
Dir., Business Services
Dir., Auxiliary Services
Dir., Operations and Technical Services
Dir., Human Resources and Staff Dev
Dir., Campus Safety and Security

POSITION SUMMARY

Chief Business Officer and serves as the District Treasurer. Serves as primary advisor to the President and other administrative staff for all College financial concerns, capital and construction planning, and other business operations of the College. Serves as advisor, in collaboration with other senior administrators, to the President on general College matters. Responsible for, and provide direction on all accounting, budgeting, and financial matters. In addition to the fiscal responsibilities of this position, other duties and responsibilities include administrative information systems, risk management services, auxiliary services, and service contracts for college operations. This is a leadership position that represents the college on community, state, and national organizations.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Master's Degree in business, accounting, or a closely related field and a minimum of five years of experience in community college administration with direct experience in community college finance, accounting, and business. A Doctorate in higher education administration, management, finance or business is preferred.

REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

Ability to effectively communicate to a broad range of individuals and organizations. Proficient written, oral, and electronic communications skills; detailed knowledge of accounting and budgeting within a complex organization; ability to function as a leader individually and within group settings; knowledge and experience of capital construction and planning methods and procedures; and an understanding of technologies and their relationship to managing a higher educational institution and of legal and regulated environment in which a college must function.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Develop and maintain detailed financial plans for the College.

Oversee and provide direction to College operations for accounting functions, budget management, treasury management, payroll functions, auditing functions, student accounts, tuition management,

Supervise and evaluate and provide direction to staff reporting to the position including; Accounting and Business Services, Database Systems, Operations and Technical Services, Human Resources and other associated functions.

Manage and oversee contracts for operational support functions such as the College bookstore, food service, custodial service, and other auxiliary contracts.

Direct and supervise all property management issues.

Assure that state and federal financial reporting is completed accurately and timely.

Review, evaluate, and select appropriate insurance and activities for managing the College's exposure to risk of loss.

Assess College operations, procedures, and activities in relation to the safety of individuals and the preservation of College assets.

Participate in collective bargaining and contract administration.

Ensure goals, objectives, and plans are developed and accomplished as designated in the College's strategic plan.

Serve on various task forces/committees and collaborative efforts assigned by the President.

Recommend new and revise existing Board of Trustees policies and procedures for areas of responsibility as appropriate.

Participates in community activities and performs speaking and other roles as a representative of the College.

Actively participates in local, state, and national educational and professional organizations in an effort to keep current on education and business-related issues and trends.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Perform other duties as assigned by the President.

PHYSICAL/MENTAL DEMANDS AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

Must be able to receive, process, and provide visual and verbal information.

Must be able to work effectively in stressful situations.

Provide timely response to externally/internally imposed conditions and deadlines.

Occasional irregular hours and travel.

Respond to concurrent, multiple, non-related issues.

CUSTOMER SERVICE STATEMENT

Consistently performs duties with concern, courtesy, and respect for all persons in a prompt and timely manner. Must work cooperatively with students, staff, and community members and be sensitive and respectful to issues of student and staff diversity.

Consistently exhibits responsiveness to others in the organization at all levels and responds to requests for assistance from students, staff, and community members in a helpful and timely manner.

RISK MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Oversees comprehensive risk management program, including insurance, secondary legal liaison, financial planning, accounting and reporting, and supervises facilities, security, IT, and human resource department. Ensures college compliance with Freedom of Information Act thereby reducing risk of liability. Ensures policies, procedures and state statute regarding purchasing are followed thereby reducing risk of liability

The above statements reflect the general duties considered necessary to describe the essential functions of the job as identified and shall not be considered as a detailed description of all the work requirements which may be inherent in the position.

Attachment B: Sample Budget Direction Communicate

Colleagues,

There has perhaps never been a time in the history of community colleges that requires more innovative and strategic thinking than current circumstances require. Despite our current resource challenges, our commitment of providing continued excellence in instruction and services to students, as well as maintaining facilities and technology that are conducive to attracting and retaining students remains our top priority, and together we will continue to meet that commitment.

As we prepare for the FY17 budget cycle, revenue streams are uncertain. Yet, it is critical that we develop a budget that includes innovative ideas about how we can best serve our students. Toward that end, along with the typical operational items, you are encouraged to submit requests for new and innovative programming or services that will benefit the student experience. The strategic plan informs budget decisions, so it is vital that you include a statement on the alignment of any new program or service requests with the strategic goals.

As state, federal and local resources become better known, it will be possible to develop a stronger sense of what is feasible to accomplish in the coming year with our ongoing sources of revenues. We will not limit our thinking, however, to ongoing sources. The foundation, under the leadership of John Doe, has accessed additional funds for our instructional programs during the past few years and she will continue to seek donor support, based on your requests. There are also grant opportunities that arise, and proposals are more easily developed if there is knowledge of your innovative ideas that will move our institution forward. In summary, do not limit your budget requisitions based on the current state of finances, but think about what may be possible if additional resources are secured. Having said that, the reality is that perhaps some programs will not be funded in the year ahead, or not funded to the desired level. Still, sharing your ideas may spark alternative ideas about how the same outcomes could be accomplished, so please bring them forth.

Detailed instructions and timelines for your budget submissions are being forwarded to you in a separate e-mail.

Jane Smith is the contact person for detailed questions you may have regarding budget preparation. Jane can be reached XXXX.

Please direct your general questions directly to me at XXXX.

Together we will navigate the current financial situation as we continue to provide the best education possible for our students.

Attachment C: Recommended Reading

First in the World: Community Colleges and America's Future
J Noah Brown, 2012

Getting to Yes
Roger Fisher and William Ury, 1981

Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't
Jim Collins, 2001

How Full is your Bucket?
Tom Rath and Donald Clifton, 2015

Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead
Sheryl Sandberg, 2013

Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking
Susan Cain, 2012

Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success
Thomas Bailey, Shanna Jaggars, Davis Jenkins, 2015

Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations
John Bryson, 2011

Students Speak – Are We Listening?
Kay McClenney & Arleen Arnsperger, 2012

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change
Stephen Covey, 2004

The Speed of Trust
Stephen Covey, 2006

What the Best College Teachers Do
Thomas Bain, 2004

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Literature abounds on the topic of turnover in the presidency at community colleges due to impending retirements, but little exists on the similar topic of turnover in other senior positions in this sector of higher education. This thesis provides a summary of available literature relative to the community college CBO role, which is also anticipated to experience significant turnover in the coming years. Select experts from Illinois community colleges provided information through surveys and interviews for their insights on the elements important to the role, and how aspiring or novice CBOs can obtain necessary skills to become effective in their first years on the job. Information is included on how the role is evolving, and current and future expectations for those entering the field from positions internal or external to this sector.

Incorporated in this thesis is a primer for aspiring and new CBOs at community colleges, which is designed to be a tool to shorten acclimation time and increase effectiveness as the role is assumed. The primer provides an introduction to the role and is a basis for considering how skills and professional development can be achieved. Years of experience by practicing Illinois CBOs are shared in the primer, with anecdotes about events that actually are happening in the field or have happened during their tenure in the position. The novice CBO who is open to learning from the experience of others who have preceded them in the role should gain insights to help them along in this complex and changing, but intrinsically rewarding profession.

Restatement of the Goal of the Study

The goal of the study was to identify the skills and knowledge for the development of effective CBO leaders and to develop guidance for incoming CBOs to aid in their effectiveness during the first year of their tenure in the position.

The literature relative to CBOs and to business and industry CFOs, as well as the responses from the interviews were closely aligned regarding the expanding and evolving role. While the CBO was once considered more of a task-oriented technician, in the current environment the CBO is expected to focus on a broader leadership role where relationship building and advising become a significant part of the role.

There are many financial and regulatory challenges in the community college sector, and not only is the CBO to be familiar with the current and future challenges, but she or he needs to develop the knowledge and perspective to lead initiatives to help the president navigate them.

Best practices for incoming CBOs are best learned from developing relationships external to the institution. Within the community college sector in Illinois, and the researcher makes the assumption that this is true in other states as well, there is a broad sharing of information among CBOs through a listserve and through conferences and meetings held throughout the year. A new CBO can easily obtain guidance on best practices through these networks. National conferences and leadership development programs are available as well for networking and gaining insights on best practices from differing points of view.

Illinois CBOs were willing to share lessons learned during interviews, and many of those have been included in the primer as experiences from which new CBOs can benefit. Specific to Illinois, the Emerging Leaders program, taught by experienced CBOs provides a specific vehicle for best practices and lessons learned in functional areas of oversight, communication, project management, and other general information relative to the role. On a national scale, the

Community College Business Officers (CCBO) is dedicated to the development of community college CBOs, and it offers a two-year leadership academy for new or aspiring CBOs. The academy includes coursework during two fall conferences, project work between the conferences and a presentation of project results for the second-year students. The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) serves all sectors of higher education, and they provide a series of programs for aspiring and new CBOs in conjunction with their annual conference. NACUBO and its regional organizations provide significant resources for CBOs of all levels, and while membership is rather expensive, the training and development opportunities of this organization are robust. Other national organizations with development programs have been identified in the primer also, including Aspen Institute program, the Deloitte transition lab, Stanford University's program for emerging CFOs, APPA's leadership academy to mention a few. Each of these organizations offers varying development programs for new or aspiring CBOs to explore for their own development plan.

The goals of the study, identifying the skills and knowledge needed for incoming CBOs and developing guidance for them, have been met within the research conducted and the written primer included herein. Following is a discussion of the limitations of the study, the assumptions of the researcher, and future recommendations on the subject.

Limitations and Assumptions

The primer was written based on input solely from Illinois colleagues. As such, the information contained herein is limited to the knowledge of CBOs associated with community colleges structured as units of local government. CBOs associated with differing governance structures may find some of the information less applicable to their situations. For example, Illinois CBOs work closely with their Board of Trustees, which may not be the case for

community college CBOs associated with a university system or a state system. There may be other differences in roles and systems, but it is the researcher's assumption that there is general similarity in many aspects of the position and that most elements of the primer will transcend the variations and will have general applicability.

The information included in the primer was based on a relatively small purposeful sample consisting of a total of fourteen interviews, primarily of CBOs, but also including the perspective of a few presidents, and with the knowledge and practical experience of the researcher. The sample was chosen based on the perception of the researcher that the participants are experts in the field. The researcher has extensive years of experience working with CBOs across the state of Illinois and has personal knowledge of their leadership and success in the field. The researcher is also familiar with many of the presidents in the state and personally chose those who participated based on their past experiences and current leadership.

Future Recommendations

The 2016 NACUBO survey indicated that 44% of CBOs are planning retirement within four years. Given this level of turnover, a primer that would serve the entire country, encompassing community colleges with different governance structures, would have broader application. The CBO role varies greatly depending on the size, location, organizational structure, and governance structure of an institution. It is therefore recommended that additional research be conducted among CBOs in various states at colleges with differing size enrollments, organizational structures, and governance structures to extend the relevance for novice CBOs across the country.

Additional research regarding the expectations and perceptions of the CBO role from others currently serving in the role, or from the presidential or trustee level would also add to the

body of knowledge included in this thesis. It would also provide insight and direction to novice CBOs forming relationships with these leaders as well as provide a foundation for what is expected of them in their roles.

The primer was written from inside the environment of community colleges. Additional research including business and industry leaders who have connections with community college CBOs, and how they perceive the role from an external point of view, would provide a broader perspective for the aspiring or novice CBO to help them form and manage important relationships external to the institution.

The primer is also a high-level summary, with topics deemed of most importance by the researcher and fellow colleagues. A wide array of topics could be included in a primer, and no doubt there will be readers who ponder on why particular subject matter was not included. Future reviews by users of the primer may produce additional topics worthy of consideration for inclusion. A review of the primer by current CBO colleagues would also be recommended to potentially broaden topics covered and to provide an additional layer of validity to the results included herein.

While the primer refers to a number of development programs from various organizations, research into whether the programs are similarly aligned may also help the novice CBO determine how advantageous each might be to their individual development path. Resources for development compete with resources for other important needs, so specific information regarding conferences or other development opportunities and how each will benefit the institution provide a more compelling argument for requested resources.

Conclusion

The role of the community college CBO is very broad, encompassing several disparate functional units and evolving into more of a leadership and advisory role rather than that of a technical expert. There is much to learn and the novice CBO needs to understand the available support for their transition into the role. In Illinois, a close network of CBOs who freely share their knowledge and experiences provides tremendous support for new CBOs. Nationally there are numerous organizations that provide training and conferences to aid in professional development as well. It is the intent that the primer incorporated herein will provide a baseline level of information for incoming CBOs, as those who have long served in this capacity pass the torch to a new generation.

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